The MYSTERY of TUMULT ROCK

By Louise Platt Hauck

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Just Pat

The Mystery of Tumult Rock

BY

LOUISE PLATT HAUCK

Author of "Missouri Yesterdays,"
"Pa and Ma Stories," etc.

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TO MY HUSBAND

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The Mystery of Tumult Rock

CHAPTER I

JUST PAT!

I'm Pat—just Pat. If you've followed the Tumult Rock case you probably know me as Patricia Armstrong, seventeen-year-old daughter of William Armstrong.

It pretty nearly killed Billy to have the sole heiress of the house of Armstrong looming up in big letters on the front page of most of the papers in the country. I didn't like it myself, but I was so busy and excited while it was happening that I didn't pay attention to anything outside The Camp; and afterwards—well, of course afterwards I didn't care about anything.

I'm going to tell all the things that need to be told about me so as to get them out of the way before the real story begins. I'm seventeen, as I said, and my hair is curly and I have several dimples and a rather nice pair of brown eyes. I haven't any mother or any family except Billy. If you're shocked at my calling my father Billy I can only say that he taught me to himself just as soon as I could talk. As for the rest, I'm something like that person in the poem whose father called him William but the fellers called him Bill. Miss Lou Pettipier calls me that "harum-scarum, long-legged daredevil;" Billy calls me his side partner; Pryor Humphry calls me, "You Pat;" and Burr—well, Burr calls me—just Pat.

Now I'll tell you how I happened to be at The Camp when the murder occurred. I was waiting

for Billy one evening on our front veranda when he and Pryor Humphry climbed out of the car. I've known Pryor ever since I used to sit in his lap and put his watch to my ear to hear it tick. He's a good old sort if he has got lots of money. He's an old bachelor too.

"Hello, you Pat!" he called. "How are the boys?"

He always said that to me because it used to make me furious when I was younger. Now I just look at him with calm indifference and pretend I didn't hear him. But he laughs, just the same.

"I've brought Pryor out to dinner, Pat," Billy said. "Hope you've got something good."

"Roast chicken, and asparagus and stuffed tomato salad and frozen orange pudding," I told him, for I'd heard Martha planning it that morning. There's a pleasant fiction in our house that I am the house-

keeper but I'd like to see anybody else housekeep while old Martha lives with us. She's black as the ace of spades and weighs 230 pounds—but gracious! she can cook!

"Fair enough," Pryor said. "If only Martha doesn't forget those hot biscuits of hers."

Now you'll see by that we aren't really a fashionable family for of course I know that dinner should always be served with just bread or dinner rolls. I love my home and it really is beautiful but Billy and I don't go in for high society at all. We just have friends.

Pryor ate as though he were breaking a hunger strike. He always does though he has a chef and a butler and all the rest of the trimmings to a meal. When he'd eaten three helpings of the orange pudding and was settling back in his chair with his

coffee and one of Billy's best cigars, he said something really interesting.

"Pat, how'd you like to spend the summer at The Camp?"

"Oh, I'd like it!" I cried. "Billy, too?"

"Of course Billy. In fact I'm only asking you to insure Billy's presence."

I made a face at him but didn't give him the woolling I usually do, I was so anxious to hear more about it.

"Is it finished—The Camp? Furnished and everything?"

"Done to the last curtain," Pryor said. "But see here now, Pat, you're not to expect too much. If you've been looking for one of those thirty-roomed, tiled-bath-with-every-suite, servants-quarters-to-the-rear affairs, you're doomed to disappoint-

ment. The Camp is just a big, one-storied log building, with small bedrooms opening from a central sitting-and-dining room. I'm taking Ah Loo up to cook for us and we'll probably pick up a houseboy in Denver. It's back to the simple life for me this summer. Think you can stand it?"

It sounded heavenly and I told him so. Pryor is a real woodsman, not one of these pretend sports that have to have a guide to find the nearest trout brook.

"Who else is coming—besides Billy and me?" I asked after a little.

"You'll never guess." Pryor began to chuckle. "Our honor guest is no other than—Hobart Conway."

"Not Mr. Conway, the famous pianist?" I gasped. "Why, Pryor, I didn't even know you knew him."

"No more did I. That's one advantage of being a genius. You don't have to bother with introductions and invitations and formalities like that. If you hear of a place that suits your rheumatism and your vacation plans, all you do is to notify your happy host that he is to be your happy host. Convenient, isn't it?"

"Pryor! You don't mean that Mr. Conway invited himself?"

"He did, though. He heard me telling Myers about The Camp and he got interested. Seems he's been looking for something in a higher altitude than any of the hotels are built. I guess The Camp'll be high enough for him," Pryor went on proudly. "Near's I can find out it's the highest dwelling in the Rockies, if not in America."

"Hope his heart's all right," I said wisely. I've

been to the mountains lots of times before so I knew mine was all right.

"See here, Pryor," Billy cut in suddenly, "what about his playing? Seems to me I've heard those concert people get up their programs in the summer. Won't we bother him, coming in and out of the room?"

Pryor looked a little sheepish at that.

"He spoke of that and—the fact is, I've agreed to have a sort of studio—a one-roomed log shack put up for him about a quarter of a mile up the trail. He's going to rent a piano in Denver—wants to pick it out himself as we go through—and then we'll not bother him nor he us."

"I thought of that too." Billy and he looked at each other and grinned. I knew my father's opinion of classical music and Pryor himself wasn't any

too fond of it. They like me to ripple out waltz tunes, and old fashioned songs and things of that sort but the only time I went with Billy to hear grand opera he was so bored that he took out a pencil and notebook and began to figure some lumber contracts he had on hand.

"It's the last touch to a perfect summer," I said delightedly. "Just think of living in the same house with a man who has played for kings and queens. Maybe he'll talk about them. Maybe he'll dedicate one of his solos to me. Maybe—"

"Have you ever seen Conway?" Pryor said dryly. "I thought not. He's forty-five, if he's a day, and the top of his head is as bald as an egg. No romance there, you Pat. Tell you what I'll do for you though. I'll ask—in fact I have asked Burr Thomas."

"Nice of you. Though I don't see what connection it has with me." I held my head as high as I could and worked with all my will to keep from blushing.

"Stop teasing her, Pryor," Billy said. "My little Pat is far too young to be interested in Burr Thomas or anybody else. In fact I've noticed lately that she seems to dislike Burr. How about it, Pat?"

"Oh, I don't dislike him—exactly," I said casually. "He treats me as though I were still in rompers sometimes but I reckon he means well."

They went on talking about the summer plans and pretty soon my cheeks cooled off. Isn't it funny how little men, even fathers, know about girls? Here was Billy, who'd almost thought my thoughts with me asking me if I *disliked* Burr! Well, I'd

let him go on thinking I did. It would make it easier for me.

By and by they got around to the subject of a chaperon for me, as I was afraid they would. Pryor had asked Miss Lou Pettipier, it seemed, and she said the altitude, both of the country and the company, was a little too high for her.

"I don't want a chaperon," I protested. "I'll take Tina with me and that's enough."

"Tina!" Pryor snorted. "She's been the aider and abettor of all your mischief since Martha turned her over to you as a maid. A sweet chaperon she'd make!"

Pryor never did approve of Tina. Her real name is Antionette Roncevalle, though where Martha ever dug it up is more than any of us can tell. Martha's last husband, at least the last husband she had be-

fore Tina was born, was named Judah Jones, but Billy said when Mother went down to see the new black baby (this was two years before Mother died and one year before I was born), Martha said her name was Antionette Roncevalle, and they'd call her Tina for short. In Missouri we never pry into these little matters the way I understand they do farther north; so pert, funny Tina has been, officially, Antionette Roncevalle all her eighteen years.

I was rather scared for fear Pryor might object to her going with me but Billy said in that dear, comfortable way that makes him so nice to live with,

"Oh, I think Tina and I between us, to say nothing of her old uncle Pryor and the good looking Burr, can manage to keep Pat out of trouble."

Wouldn't it be interesting if we could have snap

shots of future events which bear on our present remarks? If Billy, sitting comfortably at the head of the table in his dining room at home, could have glimpsed his Pat, crouching under a boulder on the wildest, roughest peak in the Rockies, with a three thousand foot drop in front of her and a murderer in back of her, I wonder what would have happened to that tranquil expression of his? It's a sure thing I wouldn't have gone one step in the direction of The Camp and if I hadn't—well, I don't know that I'd stay away if I had it to live over again.

CHAPTER II

THE CAMP

Billy and I went alone to The Camp. Billy had a big deal on which delayed him, and though he urged me to take Tina and go on ahead I wouldn't. I'd rather travel with Billy than with anyone I know. He's so jolly and knows so much about everything we see and never minds opening and shutting windows a dozen times if I want them opened or shut and is altogether so dear and delightful that I feel sorry for all the girls who can't have him for a father.

All the house party was there when we got to The Camp. Pryor met us with a cart and a pair of burros. We were fifteen miles above Terminus, a

little mining town that had two trains a week run in there, stay a couple of hours and then turn around and go back. It was awfully thrilling to think of being so high up and it grew wilder and more beautiful with every mile we climbed. When we got to The Camp and stopped outside for a look, I fairly squealed with joy. The peaks rose about us like great, towering giants. Forests of spruce, pine and hemlock made a dark green blanket everywhere. There wasn't a human habitation in sight except the low brown building that was Pryor's Camp.

"Too lonely for you, Pat?" Billy asked. I just smiled at him and took his hand to climb out of the cart. I never saw a place in my life that appealed to me so. Afterwards people who came up there out of curiosity asked me if I didn't feel the

ominous note in the atmosphere right away. I didn't. I felt a great sense of exhilaration and adventure. The adventure part was—at least it very easily could have been—prophetic.

Burr came out to meet us and with him a man who, I knew right away, was the world-famous pianist. He wasn't very exciting looking, it was true. His eyes bulged a good deal, and his head shone (I'd have worn a wig if I'd been he) and he was getting an alderman's stomach. But he was a celebrity all right and I meant to cultivate him while I had the chance. He was very nice and courteous to me. Said the place needed a woman's presence, and spoke of the sunset on my curls, and altogether he promised well.

Burr was just like he always was—grown up and big-brotherly. He squeezed my hand and said,

"Well, Pat darlint, have you come up to play about the Rockies with me?"

"With you and Billy and Pryor and perhaps Mr. Conway," I said with a questioning glance at him.

"Conway's got to work," Burr said.

Did you ever? *Conway!* And he a world-famous personage! It's perfectly true, as Miss Lou Pettipier says, there's no reverence in this new generation.

The Camp was perfectly splendid. I had a dear little room all smelling of fresh pine and Tina had another opening out of mine. Hers and mine and Billy's opened out of one side of the living-room and three others for Pryor and Burr and Mr. Conway at the other side. The kitchen and the China boy's room were in the back.

That night we all sat around the fire—and if

you think a big, roaring fire in July sounds funny you ought to try it after night up that high without one! and told stories. Mr. Conway told the best ones, all about his concerts before the court of England and the decoration that the Belgian king had given him for concert work during the war and things like that. Burr subsided after a while and wouldn't talk at all though he's seen some pretty exciting times himself, having been in the air service in France during the war. I was longing to ask Mr. Conway to play but was afraid it would seem pretty cheeky, but just before we broke up to go to bed he opened Pryor's grand piano, which he bought in the first place for me to strum on before he knew Mr. Conway was to be of the party, and played. I won't try to describe it and anyway you've probably heard him; every music lover in

America has, either in person or on the Victrola so I'll just say it was the thrillingest thing I ever heard and I went to bed calling myself the luckiest girl that ever lived to be in the house with such music.

I congratulated myself a little too soon however. The next morning Mr. Conway disappeared right after breakfast and stayed away till lunch time, practicing in his studio. I cherished a plan to hang around outside and hear him but when I hinted at it, he nipped it very promptly in the bud. He said the *thought* of being interrupted was just as bad to him as the being interrupted itself and he wished I would promise him I wouldn't come within earshot of the studio. Well, it seemed to me that it was pretty nervy asking me to keep off a mountain that I had as good a right on as he had.

But Billy said considering that there were seven peaks within sight of The Camp and that I might take a different walk every day for a year, he really didn't think I would miss that particular section. Of course I assured Mr. Conway that wild horses wouldn't drag me that way.

Now this is the way we spent our time at The Camp for the first week or so: Mr. Conway put in all his mornings and a part of the late afternoons at work in his studio. Billy and Pryor and Burr and sometimes Tina and I went fishing. Mostly though we explored on our own account. It's the most fascinating place in the world, I think. If you know where to look you can find banks of snow with ripe wild strawberries at the edge of them. There are columbines, harebells, wild asters

—every lovely thing a girl could want to bring in to beautify the big camp living room.

There are old prospect holes too and caves and shelves under ledges of rock. Pryor said it was simply suicidal for me to tramp about that wild region with only Tina for protection but Billy said what in the world could hurt me? We were too far from civilization to fear man, the only animals there were about were chipmunks and squirrels and if I would always take a stout staff with me and test any doubtful looking footing he didn't see any reason why I shouldn't roam as I pleased. That's the way Billy's brought me up and I think it's a very good way, myself. It teaches you to be quick and self-reliant and resourceful, and goodness knows I needed all those qualities before we got through with the Tumult Rock affair.

I didn't get very far in my acquaintance with Mr. Conway. He was polite enough—goodness, I should say he was! He'd leap from his chair to open a door or pick up my handkerchief. I hoped it would be an object lesson to Burr. He treated me as though I were a kid brother of his. Of course when I had on my climbing suit and wanted to go some place where most young men wouldn't want to bother with a girl that attitude of Burr's was very convenient. But when I had on my white chiffon frock after dinner, with a blue ribbon through my curls I could have used a little of that door opening treatment from Burr. Of course I know I'm not like one of his eastern young lady friends who spend their winters in Florida and their summers yachting or Bar Harboring and who say "idear" and "eyther" and "I mean to say." I'm a Missouri

girl, and proud of it. I've studied things with Billy that would make those eastern girls open their eyes, I reckon. Civil engineering and commercial law, for instance, and astronomy. And I know several other things too. I can dance and swim and I know what clothes to wear and how to wear them.

I loved Burr's eastern accent though. He took every word he spoke and washed its face and brushed its hair before he sent it out into the world. Mine just sort of slip and slide out, all mixed up and running into each other. The Missouri drawl, Burr calls it, and he says he likes it. I hope he does.

Tina was having the time of her life. She says she's never had enough sleep since she was born and when I'd go out for a tramp she'd wait till she

was out of sight of the house and then she'd pick out a nice clear space under the trees and curl up and go to sleep on the pine needles. I'd collect her on my way back and we were both suited. She bothered me when she was along because she was always afraid to jump across rifts in the rock or wade through a mountain stream or things like that.

Well, now I have the stage all set for you and you can see what we did that first week in camp. It was lovely and interesting and peaceful but that was all we had of that kind of thing for the rest of the summer.

So now I come to The Voice.

CHAPTER III

THE VOICE

One night Hobart Conway was late to dinner. Usually he was the first ready, all bathed and dressed and ready for an evening's rest. But tonight we were sitting down and Ah Loo was taking the soup before he came rushing in, still in his knickerbockers and with his black eyes and white teeth shining with excitement.

"What's up?" Pryor Humphry asked him. "You look as though you'd discovered gold under the studio."

"I have!" he said. "Just that. Liquid gold—molten melody! My God! what a voice! Velvety

softness! Divine flexibility! The skill and finesse of—"

"Oh, I see," Pryor said. "You've been trying the new records. That Galli-Curci aria—"

"Records!" Mr. Conway raved. "Records! It is a real voice, I tell you—" though of course he hadn't told us anything of the sort. "A woman's voice—the most glorious voice I ever heard. It floated through the windows of the studio as though it were coming straight from heaven."

"Maybe it was," Burr said. "I don't know where else it could come from. There's no hotel nearer that Terminus and only the burro path from there."

"What did she look like?" Billy asked.

"I didn't see her. When I got to the door she was gone. But let me tell you about it. I had finished my work and was running over the ac-

companiment of Solvejg's Song—from Peer Gynt, you know—" he looked at us and we all nodded wisely though we didn't know at all. "I hadn't struck half a dozen chords before the room seemed suddenly filled with melody—divine melody that thrilled and inspired me and somehow terrified me all at once. Almost without knowing it I went on playing. Presently I realized that the words were French—the singer was giving it the true operatic interpretation. The voice flowed on and on and only when I reached the end did I come out of my dazed condition enough to realize that a human agency was responsible for what I had heard. I fairly leaped to the door then—it, like the windows, stands open always when I'm playing—but there was no one in sight. I searched the woods but I didn't find so much as a footprint."

"You wouldn't, on the pine needles," I told him.

He went right on as though I hadn't spoken.

"I came back and played again—the Laughing Song from Manon Lescaut—Lakmé—everything of the same range I could think of, but it was of no use. The Voice was gone."

He looked as though he were about to burst into tears.

"I wonder who it could have been," Pryor said thoughtfully. "A woman alone in these mountains at dusk—there are no parties—camping parties, I mean, around here or we would have come across them in our explorations. It must be some singer from Terminus who lost her way. Funny she wouldn't come into the studio and ask for shelter."

"I'm not sure it was a human voice," Mr. Conway said. "Oh, you may smile but I tell you there

was a quality about it that I never heard in any woman's voice before."

"What did you say, Burr?" I asked.

"I said, 'assorted nuts,' " he had the nerve to tell me. "Pass them, please."

We talked about The Voice all evening. Every time Mr. Conway described it there was some new superhuman quality about it. I really think he convinced himself at last that he had been visited by some angel of inspiration as a reward for his own wonderful playing. Burr and Pryor got a little tired of the subject and went off to play cribbage and Billy got out his flies and began to sort them for the next day's fishing. But I kept Mr. Conway talking as long as I could for it did sound so mysterious and delightful. I begged him to let me sort of hang around the studio the next afternoon

and see if I could get a glimpse of the singer but he got so excited and begged Billy so hard to forbid it that I said all right, I wouldn't.

Of course the next day I was all on tiptoe to know if the singer had come again. She had! Dinner was nearly over this time when Mr. Conway came in more excited than before. The Voice had given a regular concert this time—Strauss' Voice of Spring, The Shadow Song and I don't know what else. She sang nearly everything Mr. Conway played for her and it was ten times more lovely than the day before. He hadn't seen her though. She got out of sight before he could get to the door. I pointed out to him that if she wore a dark dress this would be easy enough among those shadowy pines. All I got for my suggestion was a reminder that I had promised not to spy upon the studio.

Burr came over to me as I was sitting by the fire looking into the flames.

"Look here, Pat, don't get yourself all excited over that Voice. I think Conway's stringing you about it."

"Why, Burr, it's perfectly easy to see that he's excited himself. Of course it's real."

"Well, the artistic temperament is beyond me," he said. "I'll bet no serenader would get away without my seeing her," he boasted.

"I think he doesn't want to see her," I told him. "Perhaps she's old and ugly. All the charm would be gone then."

He shrugged his shoulders and didn't say any more.

It went on like that for three days more. Every night Mr. Conway came late to dinner but he'd stop-

ped talking about his singer. He admitted she was there, and said he hoped gradually to lure her inside the studio. I tried to question him about her but he seemed to resent my interest so I let it drop. Billy and Pryor acted as though they were a little ashamed of the affair, though I can't imagine why. I know Billy even called me aside and told me not to pay too much attention to Mr. Conway's fancies as musicians were notoriously fanciful. I think he didn't believe there was a Voice but I know there was because I heard it myself.

I wasn't spying—not at all. I perfectly intended to keep my promise to Hobart Conway and it was nothing in the world but an accident that led me in the direction of his studio. To begin with I left my compass in The Camp. Mostly I can tell directions without it, but this afternoon was cloudy

and great masses of vapor were rolling down off the peaks and confused me. I got all turned around at last and just blundered along, trying only to be going *down* and not up.

It was right below me that I first heard it—The Voice. I couldn't see anything for the mist but I could hear—goodness, but I could hear! It was all that Mr. Conway had said it was and more too. It made me want to laugh and cry both at once. I didn't do either. I just scrooched down on the pine needles and listened as hard as I could.

I've heard Alma Gluck and Galli-Curci and a lot of the biggest singers, but never did I hear anything like this. Maybe it was partly because I couldn't see her and partly because the pines rustled such a soft, sweet accompaniment. Anyway I haven't words to describe it. Just think of harps

and singing waters and bird notes at dawn and everything else you know that is lovely in sound and you'll get a faint idea of what it was like. When she stopped I truly didn't know where her voice left off and the mountain silence began.

I came down that mountain a mighty quiet and impressed girl, I can tell you. I don't know how I got back to The Camp, but I did. I felt like apologizing to Mr. Conway and making Billy and Burr do it too but I couldn't without letting them know I'd broken my promise even though it was entirely accidental. I listened to Hobart Conway talk that evening with a new respect. It did seem significant that he should have been singled out to hear such music. It was significant too, if we'd only known it.

CHAPTER IV

THE BULLET

Now I come to the night Mr. Conway didn't come home.

To begin with it rained all morning and our musician couldn't go to the studio to practice. He'd had several touches of rheumatism—it was because of that he wanted to get into a high altitude—and he was afraid to venture out in the rain. So he fidgeted about the living room, now and then touching the piano, but mostly just fidgeting. I knew he wished I'd go away somewhere so he could play but there wasn't any place for me to go except into my bedroom and I didn't want to go there. Billy and Burr and Pryor had gone fishing. I wanted to go

with them but Burr—*Burr,* mind you!—thought it was too wet for me, and I'd better stay in. I didn't see what business it was of his and I told him so. Billy smiled and Burr just asked Tina to take my cap and sweater away and—well, I stayed.

I tried to talk to Mr. Conway. I thought I'd lead up to the Voice and then confess that I'd heard it too, but he was so curt about it I decided not to. Lunch came at last and about three o'clock the rain stopped and the sun came out. Mr. Conway tore up the trail as though he couldn't wait another minute.

He didn't come when we sat down to dinner. We were used to his being late and outside of a mutter from Ah Loo who hated to have things get cold before they were eaten, nobody paid any attention to his absence. When we had finished and the men

were smoking their cigars around the fires, I asked Pryor if some one ought not to go up and see why he didn't come.

"He might be sick, or something."

"Oh, I hardly think so. He's making up for lost time, that's all."

"But there's no light in the studio," I reminded him. "Don't you remember he said yesterday that he wanted to take a lamp up in case he wanted to play after dark?"

"He'll be along pretty soon. Don't fret, Pat," Billy said and I subsided.

When it got to be an hour though, Pryor called in Soo Let, the houseboy, and told him to go up to the studio and tell Mr. Conway we'd all had dinner. The men had taken off their heavy fishing boots and were too comfortable to move. Some way I

couldn't help feeling uneasy and I went to the window and watched Soo Let's lantern bob up along the trail.

It went up in a leisurely way. Soo Let wasn't intrigued with his errand. But it came down like a falling star, jerking and jogging about in a reckless hand. He stumbled into the living room, his yellow face livid with fright.

"Come—see!" he cried, and tore back to the haven of the kitchen as fast as his turned-up shoes would carry him.

Pryor had dealt with China boys before. He knew there wasn't any use trying to get anything out of that one tonight. He and Billy and Burr didn't wait to change their clothes, but just grabbed hats off the stag antlers and hurried up the trail. I knew it wasn't the slightest use to ask to go with

them, so I waited until they were out of sight around the first curve and then I followed. I knew if anyone objected it would be Burr and he hadn't any authority over me.

The cabin was dark, of course, but the door stood open. Pryor went in first, then Billy, then Burr. I was right on his heels. I saw Pryor swing his lantern about the room and heard him say, low, but with a shaky sound to his voice,

"Jove! fellows! Look here!"

He held his lantern close to the floor. Mr. Conway was lying all huddled in a heap and I knew even before I saw the little trickle of blood from his heart that he was dead. His head was jerked over on one shoulder and he looked as though he had tumbled from the piano bench.

Pryor leaned over him.

"Bullet—right through the chest," he said. Then he went on in that same subdued sort of voice, "This is—isn't this a hell of a business?"

They set their lanterns down and began to look about. It was Burr of course who caught sight of me by the door.

"For Heaven's sake, Pat, you here? Go straight back to The Camp at once."

"Don't be foolish, Burr," I told him. "I know Mr. Conway's dead and I'm not going to have hysterics. You'd better be trying to find the one that killed him before he gets away."

"She's right," Billy said. "Pat, sit down on that chair by the door while we have a look around. How long has he been dead, Pryor, would you say?"

"Several hours, I think," Pryor said. "You see

the blood has already dried around the edges. Poor chap, who in the world would wish him harm?"

Burr had been stirring about the studio, looking from the door to the piano and back again.

"I'll tell you what I think," he began. "I believe some hunter has sent a bullet in here accidentally and then has been too frightened to stay. Either that, or he never knew what he had done."

"The piano's right in line with the open door," Pryor said thoughtfully. "There may be something in what you say. But in that case," he added suddenly, "the bullet would have gone through the back and you see the hole is in front."

"Let's turn him over," Billy suggested. "It might have gone straight through."

That was the way it proved to be. The cloth had been carried in with the bullet and it was plain to

be seen that it had come out through the front. So then they set to work to look for the bullet. They searched all around on the floor and at last I got up and went to looking myself. I knew the piano was the first place to examine and sure enough there was a little hole where a bullet had gone in.

"But it's been dug out with a knife," I exclaimed. "See, here's a place where it's splintered the wood."

"Pat, you're out of your chair," Burr said.

"At least I'm not out of my mind," I retorted. "Do you think your accidental theory will hold good now? I don't suppose your hunter would come in and dig out the bullet for a souvenir?"

"Not for a souvenir, but as the only evidence against him," Pryor said. "I think this rather strengthens that theory. He might have hurried

in to see how badly he had wounded poor Conway, found him dead, lost his nerve and hunted for and found the bullet as the only tangible proof of his connection with the accident. Cowardly of him, but mighty like some of these broken spirited mountaineers."

I shook my head stubbornly.

"It was no accident. It was—murder."

Burr turned away impatiently.

"Rot, Pat! You've been reading too many mystery stories. It was a plain, straight accident, I tell you, and I'm going down to The Camp to telephone the sheriff at Terminus. You'd better come with me and let Tina dose you with aromatic ammonia and get you to bed."

I didn't pay the slightest attention to him.

"There was The Voice," I went on, thinking out

loud. "It must have been she—but I wonder why she'd want to shoot him."

At that Billy came over and took my arm and said very gravely,

"Pat, you're letting your imagination run away with you. There was no Voice—poor Conway was having fun with you or if he was not he simply fancied the whole thing himself. Go down now with Burr, and ask Tina to give you something hot to drink before you go to bed."

"Just a minute, Billy," I begged. "Burr, you can play, can't you? The piano, I mean."

He stared at me.

"Why, yes, a little. Why?"

"Please sit down here and play what's written on these sheets of music," I coaxed. "Please, Burr, I have a reason—truly I have."

I reckon they thought the quickest way to get rid of me was to humor me so Burr sat down, avoiding as he did so the poor, sprawled legs of the dead musician. If anybody had looked in at the door just then I reckon he'd have thought we'd all lost our minds. Billy and Pryor holding the lanterns, the dead man on the floor and Burr crashing out the accompaniment to Tosti's Goodby, while I leaned across the case and listened.

"There! I hope you're satisfied," Burr said, when the last note had died away. "Now will you come? I suppose you and Pryor will stay here, Mr. Armstrong, until we hear from Terminus?"

For the next two days we had a good many people around The Camp. The sheriff from Terminus and the coroner came up and they poked about and asked questions and investigated but they all start-

ed out with the theory of Mr. Conway's death being accidental and all they tried to do was to find the careless hunter. Mr. Conway seemed to have no family and no friends who were particularly excited about his death. His manager came, but he was chiefly concerned with the fact that his star wouldn't be able to fill his concert engagements. The Denver papers sent reporters to the scene and a few of them were pretty impudent about interviewing me and after one of them had tried to fit his finger through one of my curls and Burr had knocked him down, Billy decided that I mustn't be interviewed again unless he was present.

I heard one of those same reporters telling Pryor that Mr. Conway's past wouldn't bear too close inspection and it wouldn't surprise him if some of his numerous lady loves had taken a shot at him.

Pryor pointed out to him that as a rule women didn't roam these mountains without a shelter somewhere and that there being no such shelter it followed that there was no lady.

I hope nobody will think I am hard hearted or unfeeling when I say that none of us felt very cut up over Mr. Conway's death. Of course it was a shock and we all wished the poor fellow had never gone up to the studio to practice that particular day but after all we hardly knew him and he had a rather disagreeable way of shutting you off if you tried to make friends with him. It was of course unjust to blame him for the reporters and the police and all the rest who expected to be entertained at The Camp or who brought lunches in shoe boxes from Terminus and left paper napkins and eggshells all over the prettiest canons, but it was certainly

true that if Mr. Conway hadn't got himself shot they wouldn't have come. I was mighty glad when the jury returned a verdict of "accidental shooting at the hands of a person unknown" and we settled down to private life again.

CHAPTER V

DISCOVERIES

"Burr," I said the first day we were by ourselves again, "I want you to take a walk with me this morning. Will you?"

"Perfectly stunned with delight," Burr answered. "Where shall we go—to Mirror Lake or Three Falls?"

"I'll show you where. You just come."

When we got in sight of the studio I stopped.

"This is where I want to go, Burr. I want to do some investigating on my own account."

Well, he didn't like it a little bit. He said he thought I'd put all that business out of my mind and if I persisted in trying to make out a murder

case he'd speak to Billy and ask to have me sent to Denver to visit his cousin. I laughed right in his face.

"I'm going to find out some things about this business, Burr," I told him. "If you'll help me, all right. If you won't I'll just attend to it alone."

He asked rather sulkily what I wanted him to do.

I gave him some music and asked him to play and kept watch of the trail while he did it. I didn't have much hope of the Voice's appearing again but I thought I'd try.

"Had enough?" Burr said after a while. "What's the idea, Pat? Are you still harping on that mysterious singer?"

"There was a voice here, Burr, for I heard it. It was just as beautiful and marvelous as Mr. Conway said it was. Don't you believe me?"

Burr grinned and showed his beautiful white teeth.

"Of course I believe you, Pat darlint. I think Louise Homer has a Peter Pan house in a tree somewhere near here and she sneaked down to take advantage of Conway's exceptional accompaniment. But mine is not the finished performance his was so I don't believe there's much use in my trying to lure the lady to sing to me. Now, is that what you want? Can't we go to Mirror Lake and see if the fish are biting?"

I made up my mind I wouldn't say another word to him about that Voice until I had found it. I laid my plans carefully and that night I asked Pryor for the key to the studio. He'd kept it locked since the police left and only let me have it that

morning because I told him I was taking Burr along.

"I want it all the time," I explained. "I want to use the studio as a—a sort of study, if you will let me."

Pryor gave a shrug.

"Queer taste," he commented. "I should think a kid like you would be afraid to hang around there after—what occurred. Do you think it's altogether safe, Bill?"

My parent looked at me a trifle uneasily.

"Well, Pat, I hardly know," he began. "I suppose really that cabin is the safest place in the mountains just now. Every hunter will give it a wide berth. On the other hand—"

"Oh, bosh!" Pryor said. "It's safe enough, I

suppose. Here's your key, Pat, only promise that you'll never go there without Tina along."

I promised. It suited me well enough to have Tina where I could lay my hands on her if I wanted her. The next morning before I started out Burr brought me a revolver and strapped it to my waist.

"Teaching you to use this is the only sensible thing I ever heard of your father's doing as far as you are concerned," he said politely.

Billy is used to criticisms of my bringing up so he only smiled but I went away boiling inside. I suppose Burr can't get over comparing me with his eastern friends but he needn't take the pains to tell me in so many words that I'm different.

I made my First Discovery that morning. I was so cross with Burr that I wouldn't go near the

studio but instead Tina and I went to a little canon that we call Picnic Nook. It's the prettiest place imaginable. There's a little stream that goes tumbling and splashing through it, with grass and wild flowers all about. We ate the crackers and milk chocolate we always carry with us and drank from our collapsible cups out of the stream. Then while Tina curled up for her usual nap, I explored. I went through underbrush and around rocks pushing my staff in front of me to be sure a rotten ledge of rock didn't give way. I'd just caught my skirt on a sliver of rock and was pulling it loose when I saw a flutter of blue just ahead. It was a crepe de chine scarf, with tiny white butterflies embroidered on the hems. It was the daintiest, girliest thing! I imagined there was a faint perfume about it, but I couldn't be quite sure.

At first I thought I'd take it back to Burr and ask him what he thought about the singer *now*. Then I decided that I'd wait a while longer and see if I didn't make some more discoveries. I did and the funny thing about it was that the next one came while I was with Burr himself.

I'd promised him to go fishing to Mirror Lake one morning. You have to go out there on horses if you don't want a pretty long walk. Burr would have walked it and thought nothing of it but Pryor insisted it was too far for me. So we rode slowly out under the dark hemlocks whose shade made it twilight even in the middle of the day.

Fish *never* bite for me. Billy says I agitate the line with the concentration of my thought. They bit for Burr that afternoon and by and by I left him hauling in plump beauties and swelling with

pride every time he fastened one to his string. I set out to explore the lake. It was a splendid name for it—Mirror Lake. It was exactly like a little round mirror dropped into the dark woods. You could see the clouds sailing over it, when you looked into its depths, you could see the birds flying over it, you could even see clearly your own face. I'd crossed clear on the opposite side from Burr and a jutting clump of shaking aspens hid him from me. I was leaning over the water supporting myself with both hands on the ground, and smiling to myself at the sight of my face in the water, when I saw something else. It was another face—the loveliest vision imaginable. I caught the swiftest glimpse of big dark eyes, lips that parted in a wistful little smile at me—and then before I could raise myself

and turn, there was a flutter of a dark skirt, and the aspens closed about the fleeing figure. Of course I ran after her with all my might and main. I found her footprints in the soft ground beneath the aspens—a narrow foot, smaller even than mine—but I couldn't find her. I was so sick with disappointment that I sat down on a log and gulped down some childish tears. The tiny glance I'd had at her had told me that she was young and pretty and sad. Oh, if I only could find her and ask her why she shot Mr. Conway! I burned to know whether it was an accident or if she just killed him because she wanted to.

Burr was still hauling out fish when I got back. He didn't even notice that I'd left him and I said nothing about the face in the water. He'd say I'd dreamed it probably. This thing was beginning to

work out itself so I decided to just sit tight and let it evolve.

Two days later I found a handkerchief on the floor of the studio. It was hand embroidered and I could tell by the look of it that it had been bought in one of those exclusive little shops you find only in big cities. There were tiny white butterflies on this also and I thought it must be sort of a monogram or trademark of the unknown singer. I set myself pretty seriously at work on the problem when I found this handkerchief. I couldn't exactly make out whether the visitor was getting careless and scattering her things about because she was willing to be discovered, or whether she knew that I was looking for her and left these things as sort of messages to me where she knew I would find them. I almost hoped it was the first because if

she wasn't hiding she wasn't ashamed of anything and perhaps that meant she had shot Mr. Conway by accident.

After tossing about for several hours I thought of a splendid scheme. I got out of bed and got my writing tablet and scribbled a note.

> "Dear Lady with the Golden Voice," I said, "Won't you let me find you? I know you are not wicked or a criminal and I do so want to talk to you. Please, please be in the studio tomorrow at five, or if you can't be then leave a note to tell me when you will come."

I crept back to bed thoroughly satisfied with this solution and went right to sleep. In the morning I stuck the note on the music rack of the piano and

was careful to keep out of the vicinity of the studio all day so that she could come and go as she wished. At five I went back there, and what do you think I found? A tiny white butterfly, imprisoned in a tumbler turned upside down on the piano! The tumbler belonged to the studio; I remembered seeing it there. The butterfly—I thought of the ones embroidered on the veil and handkerchief and I knew this was a message to me if I could only read it.

For the next two days I haunted the studio quite frankly. I hid on first one side, then on the other. I walked a mile or two up the trail and thought to catch her as she came down. But there wasn't the faintest indication of her ever coming again and finally I extended my exploration farther and farther from The Camp.

It was the first week in September and beginning to be pretty cold nights and early mornings before I made the next discovery. Billy and Pryor were talking of breaking camp and I was getting desperate. It had been several weeks since I'd had a sign of the lovely singer and it might be that she had left the mountains. I ranged a little farther from The Camp than I'd quite dared to do before and it was eleven miles away that I came upon the Greatest Discovery of all.

I heard The Voice again.

CHAPTER VI

THE BRIDGE

Before I can tell you where I heard it I must describe The Bridge. If you know the Rocky Mountains well you know there are many spurs from the big peaks. Sometimes these spurs just spring naturally from the mountain, again they seem to be split off and are connected with a ridge of rock or granite. Some of these ridges are broad enough to let you cross on them; but some are just a finger of rock, so narrow that even a burro couldn't find a foothold. One of these latter is The Bridge and it connects Lunette Peak with Tumult Rock.

I don't wonder at its being named Tumult, but it ought to be rocks instead of Rock. It looks as

though some giant in a fit of rage had thrown about huge boulders and walls of granite as a child would his playthings. There are a few trees to be seen from Lunette. I don't know how it looks from the farther side. The Bridge is just the edge of a big slice of rock which joins that upheaval of nature with nice, safe Lunette, over which I'd wandered so many times.

I asked Pryor once if anybody ever crossed on The Bridge. He said not to his knowledge, but of course his acquaintance didn't embrace any tight rope walkers—perhaps an exceptionally steady headed one of that profession might attempt it. There were sheer drops of several thousand feet from The Bridge and it wasn't very pleassant to think of venturing out on that thread of rock.

I was standing there that day trying to imagine

what I would do if a bear came after me and I had to choose between it and trying The Bridge and I'd just decided that I'd take the bear when I heard it—the Golden Voice. It came from across The Bridge.

Now perhaps you think I forgot my horror of that crossing and ran lightly and safely right across. I didn't. I just sat there on a good, flat rock and listened and did the hardest and fastest thinking I ever did in my life. And when the song had died away and I went back to The Camp I was still thinking. I was so quiet that evening that Burr accused me of growing tired of mountain life and said it was a good thing Billy had decided to go down next week.

"Really, Billy?" I asked, startled.

"Really, Pat. I've taken a long vacation—all of

us have, but as it's been the only one we've had since the war I guess we needed it. Now it's time we were all getting into harness again. Fish your last in Mirror Lake, have one more spread in Picnic Nook and pay farewell visits to all your favorite haunts."

That set me to thinking harder than ever and when I'd gotten rid of Tina that night I sat up in bed and decided what I'd do. You see—well it's got to come sometime, so I guess now is as good a time as any to tell what I really felt about Burr Thomas. Burr—well, I loved him so hard it was just like an ache in my heart all the time. Of course I'm only seventeen and girls of that age are not supposed to know their own minds but I knew that if Burr didn't somehow come to love me before some other girl got him there'd never be any home fires

for me to keep burning—ever. Why, when I catch sight of his dark head above his chair back when I come into the room I have to hold onto myself with both hands to keep from running up and stroking that head, and laying my cheek against it. He's the bravest, the handsomest, the dearest—but it's not the least use to try to tell how much I cared for him.

I've been so afraid that some of this would show in my eyes or ring through my words to him that I've pretended to be a little—antagonistic to him Why, if you'll believe me, Billy's spoken to me more than once about trying to overcome my dislike of Burr.

The Thomases are quite prominent in the East. Burr's father was a general in the Spanish-American war and Burr himself was a Captain in the air

service. It will always be one of the griefs of my life that I never saw him in uniform.

Now I realize that I had very little chance with him compared to all the rich and beautiful and cultured girls in his home. Pryor told me they had spoiled him so he really didn't pay much attention to any of them. But I figured that I did have just a tiny chance. I heard Burr say once that it wasn't a woman's looks or manner that counted with him. It was her brains. If she was clever and knew how to use her mind she made much more of a hit with him than if she was a second Helen. So I made up my mind that I'd cultivate my brain power for all I was worth. Billy has always told me that I had a pretty good start and I thought if I could show Burr that I was unusually wise and discerning and out of the ordinary I might—he might—well, you

known what I mean. It all sounds dreadfully bold and forward but I don't care—I love him so much!

That's the first reason I went into this Conway thing. I was going to show Burr that I could do what not he nor any of those reporter men nor even the sheriff could do—I was going to solve the mystery of the Conway shooting. Of course I did get interested in it for its own sake pretty soon but it was not due to my "insatiable girlish curiosity," as the papers said, that I found the way to cross to Tumult Rock.

Everybody keeps asking me if I wasn't terribly fraid to set about tracking a murderer down. I wasn't—no. First because I believed the singer was the one who shot Mr. Conway and I couldn't think of her as terrifying. Her scarf and hand-

kerchief were so like what any of the girls I knew possessed that I couldn't feel afraid of her.

So now you know why I was out to The Bridge as soon as I could get there the next morning, determined to find a way to get across to Tumult Rock. I knew there must be some way for it was plain that the singer had been on Lunette and that her voice had come from Tumult. So she had crossed, that was all there was to it. It's what the detectives call arriving at a conclusion by the process of elimination. I eliminated all the ways there were for a girl to get to the studio and the only one left was for her to cross The Bridge. Now if a girl a trifle smaller than I was could get over I could myself.

I left Tina away down the trail and as I had purposely kept her up later than usual the night

before I knew she would be asleep before I got out of sight. I sat down on a jutting edge of rock on Lunette and I studied that Bridge, all I could see of it. I tried again to imagine anybody walking across that tiny six inches of rock with the abyss on both sides and I simply couldn't do it. I knew that girl hadn't either, I don't care how much brains she had or how brave she was. If crossing The Bridge was the price of winning Burr Thomas he'd just have to fall into the hands of one of his eastern sweethearts, that was all.

Billy's always told me to try to see all that I was looking at. He says that most people look at an object in search of some particular aspect of it and that's all they ever do see. He's trained me so that when I glance at a house I not only know whether it's attractive and well kept, but how many

doors and windows are in evidence, what period of architecture it belongs to and things like that. It gets to be a habit with you after while and a great help in case you need to remember something about it. So now I began to look at The Bridge from a different point of view. If I couldn't cross on its edge, at least I'd find out all there was to see from where I sat.

I looked carefully down the right side. It sloped sharply with a straight granite wall. Not a foothold for a fly there. Unless I leaned forward I couldn't even see the bottom of the chasm. Then I turned my attention to the left and in a minute I gave a little cry of surprise. This side was more irregular than the other. Little broken splinters of the rock stood out here and there and the line of the main wall was so broken you couldn't

see the ridge at all. And—here is where I nearly tumbled off my boulder—about four feet below the top there was a slender little path hewn along the bumpy side. Part of it was natural and part had been made—though I didn't know that until afterwards—by knocking off some of the sharpest projections with a hammer. It was so narrow and so cleverly arranged that unless you stood or sat at just the right angle to The Bridge you couldn't see it at all. The end of the path which touched Lunette disappeared around a big overhanging rock from which, I guessed at once, there was an easy climb to where I sat. I let myself down by means of footholds in the boulder and sure enough there was an easy step right onto the path.

I was wild with delight and triumph! Now I knew where the mysterious singer was hiding. All

I had to do was to get up nerve enough to cross that narrow path—and its outer side was pretty well protected with the projections of rock—and behind those piled up masses on Tumult I'd find a tent or a cave or something which sheltered The Voice. I looked at my wristwatch. It was ten minutes to eleven. If she were there and not hiding from me somewhere on our side, in an hour I would be back where I stood now but with the knowledge of who she was, what she looked like and why she'd killed Hobart Conway.

I'm not absolutely reckless and heedless. To prove it I'll tell you that before I stepped out onto that path I felt in my belt to see if my revolver were there and laid my hat in plain sight on the boulder so that if Billy or—anybody—missed me and came to look they'd know where I'd gone; and

I—well, I even said a little prayer. I'm not pretending that I wasn't scared, for I was. It isn't the pleasantest thing in the world to be going to interview a murderer, even if she is a girl. My mouth was dry and my heart going like a trip-hammer before I got across. It's a distance of about a hundred and fifty feet, I should say. When I stepped safely on the little plateau which was the end of the Bridge on Tumult I had to stop and wait till my knees quit shaking before I went on.

After I'd got safely across I turned and looked over the path I'd come. There was a narrow slope —almost a chute from the little plateau to the path and I wondered how it came to be clear when there was nothing but rocks, rocks everywhere else on that mountain. I found out later.

I picked my way through the big, rough, red

boulders, looking for some sign of life. There wasn't a thing which showed that any human being but myself had ever stepped on this peak. Just tumbling masses of granite and lichen-covered boulders. The sun broiled down on them and without my hat I began to blister and burn. I took shelter at last under a hanging ledge and it was there I heard The Voice again. It was low this time but it seemed all around me. I couldn't tell from which direction it came. Now it seemed right in front of me and I started forward. Now it hummed and trilled behind me and I twisted about to look. Now it was on the left side, now on the right. I got so confused I just sat still and waited, not trying to find it. It died away pretty soon and though I sat waiting for nearly half an hour longer it didn't come again. It told me that the singer was

on Tumult anyway. I'd almost begun to lose faith in that fact since I'd failed to find any sign of her. Now I got up and went cautiously forward, testing with my staff the way before me. It did seem as though there should have been some kind of a path or trail but there wasn't any.

To make a long story short, I wandered about on Tumult for several hours. It was way past our lunch time but I always carried a little package of food and I knew Billy wouldn't worry. I'd often stayed out all day before. I only hoped that Tina would sleep till I came for her.

I gave up the search at last and decided that the only thing I could do was to take Burr into my confidence and let him find the Singer if he could. I found my resting place under the ledge on my way back and sat down again before I tackled the

path across. I was sitting there, poking in the crumbling rock, when I began idly to repeat a verse from Jabberwocky.

"He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxsome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood a while in thought."

Before the last word was fairly out of my mouth a voice from overhead took it up:

"'And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgy wood,
And burbled as it came.'

'Do you think I burble well, Pat dear?"

Now I put it to you if anything any more astonishing than that ever happened to anyone! To set out on a criminal hunt and have your victim

quote Alice In Wonderland at you from the top of a ledge of rock where's she been lying watching you! I could see her laughing face peeping over at me, the great dark braids of hair swinging loose. I promptly reached up and took hold of one.

"Now I've got you," I told her. "Will you come down or shall I come up?"

"I'd better come down. It's rather hot up here. Let go my hair, Pat, please. I'll be right there."

I heard a scrambling and a sliding and pretty soon she came around the side of my ledge and stood smiling at me. She was smaller than I, with big dark eyes that looked sad, dark hair and a mouth like a red geranium. She was dressed in a blue serge dress and she wore tough Indian moccasins strapped tightly to her feet.

"How do you know I'm Pat?" I asked her the first thing.

"Why, I've heard the one you call Billy and the tall young man with the nice eyes call you so," she answered. "And your colored maid, too. I know a lot about you, Pat darlint," she drawled teasingly.

"Well, I've come here to find out several things about you," I said abruptly. "Do you live here—on Tumult, I mean?"

"Yes, if you call it living." There was a sudden shadow over her face. "We're—existing up here. I'll show you before you go back—perhaps. How did you find the path?"

"By looking for it. You crossed, so I knew there must be a way."

We stood there looking at each other, not know-

ing what next to say. There were dozens of questions crowding to my lips and pretty soon I put the one that I wanted answered the most.

"Why did you kill poor Hobart Conway?"

She looked surprised.

"I didn't—did you think I did?"

"Yes. You sang for him, didn't you?"

"I sang for myself. Of course I loved his accompaniment," she said dreamily.

"H'm. I should think you might. He is—was the greatest pianist in the country," I said. "You were singing when he was shot—Tosti's Goodby, it was, and of course he couldn't hear anything—footsteps or anything like that—with those loud, crashing chords."

She looked more surprised than ever.

"How did you know that? Oh, the music on the

piano, I suppose. Yes, I was singing that and you are right, the music covered all other sounds. I didn't even hear footsteps till the revolver was pushed over my shoulder."

"You mean somebody else shot him over your shoulder?" I asked incredulously. "Do you know who it was?"

She nodded. "He'd followed me, I guess. The first I knew was when the shot rang out and I saw Mr. Conway—I know his name because it was written on some of his music—I saw him crumple up on the bench and fall to the floor."

She spoke so composedly that I felt a little thrill of repulsion. It seemed strange that so young a girl could be unmoved over a murder in which she had been so nearly concerned.

"Weren't you frightened to death?" I asked her curiously. "Didn't you *hate* it?"

"Well, it was a dreadful shock, of course, but I couldn't be sorry about Mr. Conway. He deserved it and ten times more. I wish I hadn't been there when it happened, that's all."

"How do you mean he deserved it? Tell me about it, please."

She looked about her as though expecting some one to come.

"I can't now, Pat. Truly—it wouldn't be safe. Anyway, I think you'd better go now."

"Without knowing your name? Without seeing where you live?" I cried in dismay.

"My name's Joan Marchant. I'll show you where I live some other time. Come on! I'll walk with

you back to the path. It will be dark before you get back to The Camp as it is."

She acted awfully uneasy all of a sudden and seemed to want to get rid of me. I didn't want to go but of course I couldn't force myself on her so I followed her along the ledge until we came to the little plateau. She bent down and looked and presently raised her face and turned quite pale.

"I was afraid so! I knew they'd find out you were here. Now you can't get across and there's simply no telling when you'll ever get back."

"Why can't I get across?" I demanded. "There's nobody to hinder me, is there?"

"There's this." She stepped back and showed me the spot where I had to step down to get onto the bridge path. You remember I said there was a narrow little chute leading to it. This chute was

very neatly blocked now with a long, high wedge of rock which fitted in the aperture perfectly.

"Why, who put that there?" I exclaimed. "It wasn't there when I came."

"Of course it wasn't. You couldn't have climbed up here if it had been. They've closed it while you were talking to me. They often do when they want to keep me here, but I hoped you'd get away before they discovered you."

"Who are they?" I asked. "Is it your father and mother?"

She shook her head, and a little frightened look came into her eyes.

"It's Agnes and her brother, Sam. They—I suppose you'd call them servants, but they—it's hard to tell you just what they are."

"Well, call them and ask them to move this rock

away," I said impatiently. "It *is* getting dark and Billy will be frightened about me."

"There isn't the least use to ask them. They wouldn't have put the rock there if they hadn't meant you are to stay. Oh, Pat! Why did you come over to Tumult? You'll certainly get yourself into trouble now!"

"Pooh!" I said stoutly, though I'll own I was growing a little uneasy. There was a peculiar kind of atmosphere about the place—I can't just describe it, but it seemed as though there were plans and thoughts about that were wicked. "Let's us pull it out then. Both of us together can surely do it."

She shook her head.

"No, there's a trick about it. I've tried and tried till my hands were bruised. You simply cannot move it. *They* can."

"For goodness sake, Joan, stop saying They," I told her sharply. "It sounds like a ghost title. Take me to this—what's his name? Sam? and let me see if I can't talk him into opening this chute."

"Try it then, young lady. I'm right here."

CHAPTER VII

THE HOUSE ON TUMULT

The voice came from behind us, and I jumped as though I had been shot. In the half light the man's face looked like some wild animal's. His long hair, of a sort of mousy color, was tossing about his eyes and they gleamed through it fiercely. He hadn't shaved for weeks and the thick stubble on his cheeks and chin didn't add to his beauty. He was tall—over six feet, I should say, and broad shouldered. Altogether he was enough to make a seventeen-year-old girl's heart go pretty fast when she saw him for the first time.

"Well, why don't you say something?" he said. "I'm here, you see."

"Move that rock. I want to go home." I could feel the quavers in my voice but I hoped he wouldn't hear them. Joan stepped forward and began to talk with a note of pleading in her tones.

"Sam, this young lady got over here by accident. She's tired now and wants to go back. Please let her."

He simply grinned and said nothing. It made me so mad some of my fear left me.

"You'd better let me go. My father will be after me pretty soon."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't think so, little miss. There's a good deal of territory to be covered before they get to—the Black Pool."

I stared at him.

"What has the Black Pool to do with me?"

"Little miss left her hat on the rocks, eh? It's on the bank of the Black Pool now."

It swept all over me at once—what he meant. I'd been with Billy several times to look into the awful black depths of the pool that was said to be bottomless. I remembered I asked Billy if he thought it really was and he said,

"You can't tell what sort of freak nature will indulge in when she gets on a rampage, Pat. The old lady certainly had a bad case of hysterics when she threw things around these mountains. I have an idea this pool has its outlet in an extinct volcano crater and in that case it might as well be bottomless."

"Have you ever heard of anybody being drowned in it?" I asked fearfully.

"There was a young boy once—I believe he was

running from something he feared and he plunged in without realizing where he was."

"Was he ever found?" I asked again, for Billy had stopped.

"No, never. Come on, Pat, let's go where it's pleasanter."

This scrap of conversation came back to me word for word while I stood there staring at Sam's grinning face. I knew just how Billy and Pryor and Burr too, of course, would search all night long for me. I knew how they would question poor Tina who couldn't tell them a thing. I wondered just when the thought of the Black Pool would first strike them and I shut my eyes and turned a little sick as I pictured my poor Billy finding my hat on the bank. I'm all the child of my father's house, as the song says, and it stands to reason he'd miss

me more than the father of five or six. Burr too—someway I could see the pain in his eyes when he knew that I was really gone forever in that black water.

But I wasn't! I pulled myself up with a jerk. I was alive and perfectly well and here was the time for me to use those brains I'd been hoping I possessed.

"What's your idea in keeping me here, Sam?" I asked him calmly. "If it's robbery I haven't a valuable thing about me except my wristwatch. You may have that if you want it."

I unstrapped it and held it out to him but he made no move to take it.

"Well, what do you want then?" I cried. "Is it a kidnapping scheme? Because if it is say so and let me write the message or whatever the usual pro-

ceedure is in a case like this. My father isn't a very rich man but I know he'll give all he's got to get me back."

For a minute I thought I'd struck the right note. A covetous gleam came into his shifty eyes. But he shook his head.

"There ain't no use in your asking questions," he said harshly. "Little miss came to Tumult of her own accord. Now she'll have to stay—awhile." He tacked the last word on with another of his horrid smiles and I thought it extremely likely he meant I was never to leave. While I stood glaring at him a woman came around the turn and caught at Sam's arm. She was ugly enough and looked enough like him to be his sister so I knew it must be Agnes. She had hair the color of his but after I saw her in the light I realized that perhaps once she had been

rather a good looking girl. She had beautiful eyes.

"Come—come at once!" she said to Sam. "I can't hold her any longer."

Sam cast another look at the rock as though to be sure it was safely there and then turned and went away with the woman. Joan was crying.

"Well!" I said, drawing a long breath. "This is a pretty mess. Stop crying, please, and answer some questions. Was that Agnes?"

"Yes. She's a little better than her brother. They've gone to the hut. Come, Pat, we might as well go too. There's no use to stand here and it's getting cold."

I followed her around the ledge and through a winding path that I hadn't seen before. After we'd gone for a quarter of a mile we turned abruptly onto a level space of perhaps fifty yards in width

and length. It was almost dark by now but I could make out the outlines of a small log hut huddled against the rocks. The slope above it was so sharp that the roofing ran right into the mountain side and I found afterwards there was a cave-like space in the back. We were hurrying toward the door in the front when a sound arose that made my blood turn cold in my veins. It was a scream—a horrid, wild scream that rose and fell and died away, only to be taken up again in that awful despairing wail. I never was so frightened in all my life. I clutched Joan with a grip that must have left black and blue marks on her arms.

"What is it—oh, what is it?" I cried.

Joan was shaking herself, poor girl, but she didn't seem surprised.

"I guess—I think it's mother. Come with me. I must go to her."

I didn't want to follow her in where that awful voice was, but neither did I want to stay alone out in the darkness. So I went in behind her and pretty soon I found myself in the strangest room I was ever in. It was formed partly of logs and partly of the natural rock walls of the mountain. There was some rough furniture made out of trimmed spruce boughs. A bed in one corner, a makeshift table and some benches. There were two doors opening from it besides the one through which we had entered, so I knew there were other rooms. In the bed was the woman who had screamed. I knew it was she because she was sinking back as though she were exhausted and Agnes was rubbing her

hands with something strong smelling. Sam was just going out one of the inner doors.

"Mother! Poor Mother!" Joan cried, running over and throwing herself down by the bed. "Did the pain come again?"

The big eyes in the white face looked at Joan and the pale lips whispered,

"Sing."

And again the Golden Voice filled my ears with its wonderful melody. I stood just inside the room and stared with all my might. Was this young slip of a girl really the mysterious singer whose voice had so charmed Mr. Conway? I thought of the volume of sound, the depth of feeling we had both observed and I rubbed my eyes and looked again to see if it was really Joan. She knelt on the dirt floor, her mother's hands in hers, her head thrown

back and she sang on and on like an angel. Gradually the sick woman's drawn face relaxed and when Joan finally stopped, her mother closed her eyes as though she could sleep. Joan beckoned to me and I crossed the room after her.

We went into a small room which was really no bigger than a large closet. There was a heap of pine boughs thrown on the floor with a couple of army blankets spread over them. There was a small trunk on the floor and there were a few dresses hanging from nails in the log walls. It might have been a room in one of our ancestors' first homes in the West.

I waited till Joan had sunk down onto the bed and motioned me to the trunk. Then I began.

"Now, Joan, I want to know all about this. Why are you here, who are you, why am I to be kept

here and what hold have this Sam and Agnes over you? And what is the matter with your mother?"

"She's ill—she's dying," Joan said, answering my last question first. "Oh, Pat, do you know what it is to see your mother day by day slipping from you and know that you must not grieve because death will be so much easier for her than life?"

"I have no mother," I said softly. "But I have Billy and he's been mother and father both to me. Can't your mother be cured?"

Joan shook her head sadly.

"No, it's incurable—her disease. We can only hope that she will go soon. The pain is dreadful. That is why she screams—when it gets to be more than she can bear in silence."

There seemed nothing more to be said about that subject so I went on to my other questions.

"Who are Sam and Agnes?"

"Agnes is a girl my mother helped when she was in great trouble. She's stayed with her ever since as a sort of maid though lately she's been housekeeper and nurse and everything. Sam is her brother. I've only seen him this summer though I know he used to stay with Agnes sometimes when I was at school."

"You've been to boarding school?" I asked, interested at once because there was a time when Billy thought I'd better go. I didn't think so.

She looked at me surprised.

"Why, where did you think I learned to sing like that? Don't you know I have an unusual voice?"

Of course I did and I told her so.

"I inherited it from Mother. She used to be a

concert singer—she sang in grand opera for three seasons. She sent me away to study—music and French and Italian—all the things you have to know if you're to be a great singer. I've only lived with my mother this summer."

"Why is she up here? Can't you afford—" I tried to put it delicately, "can't you afford to live in the city?"

She smiled a little.

"Oh, yes, we have plenty of money, I believe. At least I have always gone to expensive schools and had nice clothes and everything. I think we came up here because the doctors thought it would make mother's last days easier—up so high, you know—and then it was Sam's doing really."

"You could have gone to one of the hotels farther down. This is surely no place for an invalid.

Why, look at her bed—"

"I know it. That is what I don't understand. I didn't know where we were going until I got a letter saying that Agnes would meet me in Denver. That was early in the summer. She brought me up here, across the bridge path and I found mother here. When I asked her why we were living in this rough fashion she said Sam thought it best and she didn't care where she was."

"But what about you?" I asked indignantly.

"I suppose she thought I could stand it for a short time," Joan sighed. "I know she didn't expect to live this long, poor Mother."

It all sounded simple enough but my mind went groping around trying to find the real key to the story. I thought of Mr. Conway.

"Why did you sing for Mr. Conway?"

She blushed a little.

"It was the hunger for music, I guess," she confessed. "I'd formed the habit of wandering about the mountains, a good deal the way you do yourself, Pat," she said looking at me. "And one day I heard some one playing down in the cabin you call the studio. You must remember that I've been up here longer than you. I even watched them building The Camp and the studio place. It was one of the ways I filled my time—lingering on the outskirts of your grounds watching what went on. Of course I didn't know who Mr. Conway was but I hung around and heard him play until one day he began the Peer Gynt song and I couldn't resist singing. It was one of the songs I'd been working on just before I left school and it was so familiar it seemed to sing itself. Then I got frightened and

slipped away. I came back, though, the next day and I soon saw that he didn't mean to try to discover me, so I sang and sang every afternoon and enjoyed it more than I can tell you. Then one day I found his name on some of his music and I was awfully excited. We girls in school used to long to get a glimpse of him but we never did. And here I'd been singing to his accompaniment and never knew it. I hadn't said a word about my adventures to Mother but when I made that discovery I couldn't keep from telling her. She went right into hysterics and I had to call Agnes and Sam both to hold her. It upset Agnes too and she had a fainting spell when Mother got quiet. Altogether I thought my singing days with Mr. Conway were ended but the next afternoon Mother called me to her and told me to go on singing, that it was a

wonderful opportunity and I must take advantage of it. She warned me not to let myself be seen, though, or perhaps so famous a musician would be disgusted when he found he'd been playing for a young girl. So I did. I went down there every day until—well, until Mr. Conway died."

"*Died* is good," I said. "Until he was murdered, you mean. Who killed him?"

She shut her lips tight as though she didn't mean to tell me. I leaned over and shook her arm.

"Joan! Tell me, else I'll think you did it yourself."

"Well, I didn't, so you may think what you please. I promised I wouldn't tell who did and I'd advise you not to inquire too closely into it either."

She glared at me and I glared back. It was too ridiculous, we two girls, in such strange surround-

ings, almost strangers to each other and actually scrapping about who committed a murder. I thought of my mysterious and divine singer and I had to laugh to see her now.

"You said he deserved it," I reminded her after a while. "Why did he?"

"Well, he had done lots of cruel and wicked things," she said. "If I could tell you what they are you'd agree with me that being shot was really lots less than he deserved. I haven't felt a minute's pity for him since, though of course I miss his music," she sighed.

"What about the scarf and the handkerchief?"

"I left them accidentally," she answered, "I couldn't seem to keep from hanging around you. I was so lonely and you all seemed to be so fond of each other and to have such good times. I wanted

dreadfully to get acquainted with you but Mother positively forbade it and after Mr. Conway's death of course I was afraid to be found. When I discovered that you knew I was somewhere in the mountains I couldn't resist playing hide and seek with you a bit. I got your note in the studio. Did you get my message?"

"The butterfly? Yes. What did it mean?"

"Nothing except it is a sort of sign of me. I always have them embroidered on my handkerchief and underwear. I wanted you to know that I had your note and I couldn't think of anything else to leave. A white butterfly fluttered in just then so I caught it and put it in the glass. I hope you found it before it was dead?" she asked anxiously.

"I did."

I looked at her curiously. This was a queer girl,

announcing one minute that she thought shooting was too easy a death for the world-famous pianist who had given her so many hours of his music, the next afraid that a butterfly would die before I came to release it. I gave her up for the time-being and turned my attention to getting the rest of the story.

"Who made the path across The Bridge?"

"Sam, I guess. At least he was there to show Agnes and me how to cross when we came here in the spring. I asked Mother how she ever got across and how they got what little furniture there is here but she just shook her head and wouldn't tell me. Poor Mother."

Now I came to the question that interested me the most.

"How long do you suppose that Sam will keep me here?"

She gave that same furtive little glance around that she had out on the rocks.

"Bend your head, Pat, and let me whisper. There's something going on in this place that I don't know about. Agnes and Sam whisper and mutter to each other and I've heard enough to know that they're only waiting for Mother to—die before they bring some plans of their own to a head. I'm awfully afraid they will keep us both here till they get away themselves. Sam told me today I couldn't cross over to Lunette any more."

I rose right up at that.

"What! stay here days, perhaps weeks, while my father and—and Burr think I am drowned? Well, I reckon not! I'll show your Sam that I'll not stay a minute longer than I want to."

"Pretty big talk, Pat," Joan said softly. "But what can you do?"

For the first time I thought of my revolver. Now doesn't that show that a real seventeen-year-old girl isn't a bit like one of those movie heroines who always flash a loaded weapon in the villain's face at precisely the right moment? I've longed all my life, or at least ever since I was old enough to see movies, to get a horse-shoe-shaped-mustache villain in a tight place and then carelessly pull out my trusty gun and make him open the door, or drop the knife or unlock the trunk that had the papers in, or whatever it was that he ought to be doing to make the story turn out right. Now here was my chance—and where was my revolver? I remembered having it when I crossed the ridge and now it was gone! To save my life I couldn't tell how or where.

It made me feel awfully cast down and discouraged.

"Come to supper," Agnes said, sticking in her head at the door.

CHAPTER VIII

NIGHT

We ate at a little table drawn into the farther corner of the room in which Joan's mother lay. She seemed to be asleep and we talked only in whispers. Agnes brought us in bacon and eggs and coffee and bread from one of the little rooms off the big one. I didn't know but she and Sam would insist on eating with us, but Sam kept out of sight and Agnes waited on us quite nicely. The food was good enough but now and then a picture of our own supper table with Billy and Burr and Pryor all standing up when I came into the room in my yellow organdy or my little blue silk mull, made me choke over my coffee.

Joan looked at me anxiously. I reckon she was beginning to realize how bad it was going to be for me away from Billy and she was sweet and gentle with me all during the meal. Afterwards we wrapped ourselves in the blankets off her bed and went and sat out on the rocks. There wasn't any moon but the stars were bright and anyway it was better than whispering in the big room or crowding into her tiny one. Joan told me a lot about her school life and her plans for becoming an opera singer when she was a little older. It turned out that she was nineteen, two years older than I, though she didn't act that old. She told me one thing that surprised me a good deal. She had a father, a wealthy man who lived in Philadelphia and he'd been sent for to see her mother.

I didn't like to ask questions, but Joan went on

and told me of her own accord that her mother and father had been separated ever since she was a baby and that she'd only seen him a few times in her life.

"He came to the conservatory to see me last winter," she said. "He told the professor who he was and I was sent for and introduced. Think of it! Being introduced to your own father!"

"Was he—nice?" I whispered, taking her hand in mine.

"Oh, yes. He was lovely to me; told me that he had thought about me for years and if anything ever went wrong I was to let him know and he would come. When I found Mother was so ill I asked her if he shouldn't be sent for and after a while she agreed to it. Now I think she is just waiting to see him before she—let's go. I think

she did something that she is sorry about and she wants his forgiveness before she dies."

"When will he come?" I asked.

"He ought to be here now. Sam went away for two days last week and Agnes said it was to telegraph. I think he expects to go down to Terminus tomorrow and wait for my father."

I sighed. That meant another day and night here. I knew when Joan's father—or anybody's father for that matter—got here he wouldn't keep me a prisoner another minute.

While we sat there talking Mrs. Marchant—somehow I never learned to call her that—I always thought of her just as Joan's mother—had another attack of pain and her screams brought Joan into the house. I slipped away because I couldn't bear to hear her. I'd gone quite a ways before I

discovered that I'd blundered onto the path to The Bridge and I thought as long as I was there I might as well go and look at that rock again. I couldn't get the idea out of my head that I might be able to cross yet tonight.

I heard voices as I came around the ledge. Sam was there talking to somebody who was crossing. Right away I thought of Joan's father. Perhaps that was why Sam hadn't let us across. He was expecting Mr. Marchant and he needed me there for a witness or something. I didn't stop to reason it out. I just stepped into the shadow of a rock and waited, watching the tiny spark of the stranger's lantern following Sam across. I was so glad, for I thought I *would* get back to The Camp that night after all. I began to picture my return.

Billy would be out searching the woods and Burr

with him. Pryor would probably be in the house waiting to see if I came in from another direction. He'd jump when he saw me and say,

"Well, you Pat! This does cap the climax. It's down to the lowlands for you, that's a cinch."

Then he'd blow the big horn and Burr would come running and Billy, and I'd get my arms around Billy's neck and hug all the scold right out of him.

The picture made me so homesick that I didn't stop to watch Joan's father any longer but ran back to the hut and beckoned her to come outside.

"Mother's asleep," she said, her poor little face all white with feeling. "Want to go to bed now, Pat?"

"Your father's here!" I whispered and drew her onto the path. "I saw him crossing the ridge with Sam. Oh, Joan, isn't it great?"

She didn't more than half believe me, I think, but she hurried along with me and just before we came to the turn where the ledge projects, we heard their voices. I reckon we'll never know what made us slip into the shadow of that big rock and listen.

"You took your time about getting here, I must say," growled Sam. "Thought you were never coming."

"You didn't figure on all I had to do at my end," another voice answered. "I got here as soon as I could. Has the old girl croaked yet?"

Well, I thought that was a pretty way for a man to speak of his wife, but I didn't dare say anything to Joan. Right there, though, I felt her touch my arm and she put her lips to my ear and whispered:

"Pat, that's not my father!"

I lost what Sam said because of that but I didn't lose a word of what came next.

"What have you done with the young one?"

"She's here yet, and another that walked into trouble. Damned if I know what to do with either of them now."

"Let 'em shuffle for themselves when the old lady kicks off."

"That's what I'd planned but the Marchant kid knows about—well, Conway, you know."

There was a low whistle.

"That puts a different face on it. I don't see what you wanted to do such a damned foolish thing for, Sam. You might've knowed it'd complicate matters."

"Foolish! It was the chance of my life and I took it, you bet! Shunted, you might say, right in-

to my hands after all these years. Agnes has been a different woman ever since."

"Well, if you got any satisfaction out of it, that's your affair," the stranger said with a shrug. "But about the kid—you ain't taking any chances of her blabbing?"

"Agnes says she'll keep a still tongue in her head if her mother tells her to. I don't know—"

"Don't trust none of 'em, Sam. Better give 'em both a toss over the wall before we pull out. It's safer."

"We can decide that later," Sam said, I thought a little uneasily. "Agnes won't leave while the Missus lives and we've got to get things in better shape here. Come on up to the house and have something to eat."

They moved off together and Joan and I clutched

each other in utter terror. We didn't need any explanation of what they were planning. It was perfectly clear to me that we were in the hands of desperate men.

"Joan," I said suddenly, "did Sam shoot Mr. Conway?"

"Yes," Joan said, and I could hear her teeth chattering with cold and fear. "He came up behind me and shot him right over my shoulder."

"But why? What had Mr. Conway done to him?"

"It was his sister. He—took Agnes away from her home, you know, and then deserted her and she didn't have any money and her baby died and—then mother found her. Mother took her into her own house and looked after her and ever since that time she has worshiped the ground mother walks on. Sam always said he'd get his chance at Mr.

Conway some time and when it came of course he took it. I—didn't blame him."

"But your mother?" I asked her. "Surely your mother wasn't willing that a man—even if he had done wrong—should be shot and killed?"

"Mother—Mother—" Joan began miserably, "Oh, Pat, don't you see? He—Mr. Conway—had treated mother like he had Agnes; only mother was married and had me, and Mr. Conway fell in love with her and persuaded her to run off with him. And after father got a divorce Mr. Conway wouldn't marry her, but left her to get along the best way she could with me. He'd grown jealous of her voice, and because all the managers offered her more money than they did him he hated her and finally told her she could shift for herself. She put me in a school and sang until her throat got weak and she

had to give it up. She'd saved enough from her big concerts to live on and I think father has helped with my expenses. But she hated Mr. Conway as bad as Agnes and Sam did and when she found that he was really here within reach she sent me down to sing to his playing so Sam could get his chance."

"How dreadful!" I said. "How perfectly dreadful!"

"I don't know," Joan answered. "He'd ruined two lives. It was only fair that he should give his own to pay. But, Pat—what's to become of us? Do you suppose if I were to go to Sam and tell him we'd swear never, never to breathe a word of what we knew that he'd let us go?"

"Sam might—not the new man!" I answered, after a little thought. "There's something more going

on here than we know about, Joan. What is that strange man here for anyway?"

"Oh, Pat, I don't know. I wish we were down in the nice safe world where girls are going to parties, and families are out driving in their own cars, and the streets are full of happy, natural people with no horrid secrets or bad men or anything."

She leaned her arm against the rock and put her face against it.

"Never mind, honey," I coaxed her. "It'll all come out right. We've got to make it come out right. In the first place, I don't believe my father and Burr will just give up and say that I'm drowned in the Black Pool and that's all there is to it. I don't care if Sam did leave my hat outside. I know Billy will know I have more sense than to

let myself get drowned in there. I'll bet he is out looking for me now."

"He'll never find you here," Joan said forlornly.

"Maybe he will. I found the path, didn't I?"

"It was just an accident. You happened to be sitting where you could see it. I've seen your father stand right there and look across at Tumult and once I heard him tell your young man that probably no human being had ever stepped on that heap of rocks."

"Where were you when you heard that?" I asked eagerly.

"Behind the rock that Sam has stopped up the chute with. Pat, where are you going?"

I was running like a wild thing back to the rock.

"If you could hear him across The Bridge, why couldn't he hear us—if we shout?"

"He could, if he happened to be up this high. But you know as well as I do that there's just one chance in a hundred of his being there."

"We'll take that chance then," I said. "Come on."

We hurried, stumbling and falling, over the rough path and finally came at last to the place that was the closed door to all my hopes. And you can believe it or not, just as you please, but away off on Lunette there were tiny dancing lights that meant Billy had a searching party out.

"You see?" I asked Joan happily. I cupped my hands about my mouth to send out a long, loud, "Halloo," and the next thing I knew a big, soft, smothery something was thrown over my head and face and I was picked up and carried rapidly away.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE HOUR OF DEATH

"In the hour of death, after this life's whim,
When the heart beats low, and the eyes grow dim,
And pain has exhausted every limb—
The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him."

Joan's voice came softly from the room where her mother lay. I was huddled in a heap on her bed of pine boughs, worn out with the struggle I had had with my captor. It was Sam, of course, and even though he was a pretty large sized man, I'd given him quite a hard job getting me back to the hut. I fought and kicked till he must have been glad enough to dump me down on the bough

bed and shut the door. Joan was locked in with me at first, but after a while Agnes came and told her to come out. Her mother was much weaker and she wanted Joan. The door was left unlocked but I knew it was of no use to try to get out. They were all in there—Joan, Agnes, Sam, and I supposed the strange man, though I didn't hear his voice in the occasional low tones of the others.

Mrs. Marchant was dying. Joan knew it, and Agnes, and so did I. I felt sorry for the poor woman but I couldn't help wondering what her death was going to mean to us. Would it hasten the plans of Sam and his friends or would it cause a delay which might hold some hope for us?

I wondered where Joan had found the quaint old words she was singing to her mother. I wondered how even at that sad time—for of course after all

she was Joan's mother and it must be a terrible sorrow to know that she was dying—I wondered at the wonderful, golden sweetness of that voice. There was no doubt of Joan's future career, provided those beasts let us loose to pursue a career.

"When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And a man is uncertain of his own name—
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame."

"Come out into the other room," Agnes said harshly. "Miss Joan wants you."

I went out and knelt beside Joan where she held her mother's hand. I understood her need of somebody young, and warm, and friendly at this awful time. Agnes' eyes were red and every now and then she put her apron to her eyes and sobbed aloud.

Sam looked sorry too, as much as his awful face would let him. I was thankful that the strange man wasn't in the room.

The sick woman lay with closed eyes. Her face was as white as the pillows and only the faintest stirring of the sheet above her heart told that she was alive at all.

"Sing," she whispered, when Joan had stopped. "Sing, my girl—sing."

"When the last sigh is heaved, and the last
tear shed,
And the coffin is waiting beside the bed,
And the widow and child forsake the dead—
The angel of the Lord shall lift this head."

"Oh, Joan, how dreadful," I whispered. "Sing something else. Sing 'Son of my Soul.'"

She shook her head.

There was a little silence then, the woman in the bed seeming to be asleep or unconscious. I looked about from the faces of the brother and sister to the open windows through which came the soft murmur of the night breeze. The room was dimly lighted with a lantern which filled the air with horrid kerosene fumes. Joan knelt on, her face buried in the covers of the bed. Her mother's breath came more and more faintly, and it seemed to me we could watch the lessening of each movement of the sheet.

All at once a remembrance of a certain evening I'd spent last winter in my own room came into my head. I don't know what set it apart in my mind from a hundred other evenings but something did. It was raining and Billy was down town on busi-

ness. I'd slipped into a big, soft bathrobe and was curled up in an armchair before the fire that crackled and hissed in my grate. Tina was on the hearthrug, now and then, when she thought I didn't see her, reaching for a chocolate from the box on the table beside me.

My room looked its prettiest in the firelight and light from the rose shaded electric candles. The old ivory furniture and the dark shining walnut of the floors and woodwork gave back lights of their own. There was a dull green vase of Killarney roses on the dressing table. Burr had sent them to me and as they were the first flowers I'd ever had from him, they were something more than roses. Every now and then I turned to look at them and then the fire grew warmer and the room prettier. It was all so comfortable, and pretty and

normal! That was only a few months ago, and here I was kneeling beside a girl I'd never seen this time yesterday, with a dying woman in the bed, and two cutthroats perfectly willing to leave our bones bleaching in some deep chasm of the mountains.

Something hot splashed down on my lips and a little sob escaped them. Perhaps it was that which disturbed the sick woman. She opened her eyes and looked around.

"Joan—daughter—are you there?"

"Yes, mother."

"I—think I'm—going—now. So—sorry—not—to see—your father—first. You'll tell him—I was sorry—"

"Yes, mother."

"You'll—be a better woman—than your—mother, Joan?"

"Oh, Mother," she sobbed.

"I know, dear—I know. But—try. Agnes—"

"I'm here, Mrs. Marchant."

"Take care of my—girl—will you? Promise, Agnes."

There was a little silence while the eyes of the woman went to her brother's face and back to that of the sick woman. Mrs. Marchant stirred a little.

"Agnes—remember—the bond—between us. Take care—of my—daughter Joan. Promise."

"I promise, Mrs. Marchant," the woman said firmly, and I could hear the long sigh of relief from the bed. Sam scowled and I thought shook his head at his sister.

Another long interval while the sick woman lay slipping into eternity. The strange man came to the door and looked in but Agnes motioned him

angrily away. Now and then she wiped off the pale forehead with a handkerchief dipped in some smelly stuff and now and then she poured a few drops of medicine between her lips. Mostly, though, we just sat and waited for the end.

"Joan—" her mother said again.

"Yes, mother."

"Sing—the last verse. Stand out in the room and let your voice out. I—want—to go with—it in my ears."

Joan stumbled out onto the floor and seeing the poor thin hand groping about, I took it into my own. Holding it so, we listened while Joan sang the last verse of the old, old song her mother loved.

"For even the purest delight may pall,

And power must fail, and the pride must fall,

And the love of the dearest friends grow small—

But the glory of the Lord is all in all."

She found that glory, poor, poor soul before Joan had come to the end. I saw the little smile, heard the little gasp that meant the finish to a life which however unconsciously was working such pain and trouble to so many people now. I'd never seen a woman die before, but I knew. I stretched out my hand to close the sightless eyes, but Agnes was before me. She thrust me backwards with a single gesture, nearly knocking me over on the floor. Joan knew too what had happened and she burst into a wail. As soon as I could I got her into her little room and closed the door.

CHAPTER X

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

Long after poor Joan had sobbed herself to sleep on the bough bed with my arm around her, I lay awake thinking. I couldn't see any way out of this tangle for us. There was a gleam in that strange man's eyes, a set to Sam's hard mouth that told me they wouldn't trust their liberty, perhaps even their lives, to a couple of girls. With the death of Mrs. Marchant our last hold on Sam was gone.

To be sure, there was Agnes. I thought she would keep her promise for she had weighed the matter like one accustomed to carrying out her word. But she was a woman and even if she allied herself with us we were three women against two desperate

men. And my revolver was gone. That gave me an idea. Perhaps Agnes knew where it was and could get it for us. I fancied I could make those gentlemen open up The Bridge path if I once got that gun in my hands.

Over and over again my thoughts turned back to The Camp. You certainly do think of the silliest things when you are in danger, I found that out. I had a bright red silk kimono that Tina was crazy about and I wouldn't give it to her because I liked it myself. I remember that between my plans to get the revolver and to coax Agnes into helping us away I kept saying to myself,

"I know Tina'll take my red kimono. I know she's wearing my red silk kimono now."

Wasn't it silly?

I fell asleep at last, thinking of what I'd say to Tina when I got back and caught her wearing it.

The sun was high when we woke up. I stared around at the rough rock and log walls, wondering what had happened to my room. Then I remembered, and my heart turned right over when I realized where we were.

We stayed in the hut all that day. When we went out to breakfast we found that Agnes had moved Mrs. Marchant's body to a little room where she herself had slept and I looked at her gratefully. It would have been awful to eat and talk and spend your time in the same room with that still presence. The reason we had to spend it in the hut at all was because Sam and the stranger had gone away before we were up and they had locked and barred all the doors and windows. I thought prob-

ably they had gone to make arrangements about Mrs. Marchant's funeral and I wondered how they would dispose of us before the necessary people got there.

When I got Joan nicely settled by the window, reading a chapter out of a Bible I'd found in her room, I hunted up Agnes and opened a conversation. It wasn't easy.

"Agnes," I said, "you must have thought a great deal of Miss Joan's mother."

"I thought enough of her to take care of her to the day of her death," she said in a dry kind of voice.

"And Miss Joan? You love Miss Joan?"

"Why should I?" she snapped. "I ain't never knowed her to speak of."

This didn't seem to be a promising vein so I opened another.

"How soon will the funeral be—Mrs. Marchant's, I mean?"

"Didn't know there was going to be a funeral."

"Won't they send the—the body back to Philadelphia—to Mr. Marchant?"

She looked at me very coldly.

"So Miss Joan's been talking, has she? I'd a thought she'd want to keep some things to herself."

"She only told me a little—just what I asked her," I soothed her. "Will you go back to Philadelphia with—Mrs. Marchant?"

"I ain't made my plans. And you won't get nothing out of me about Sam neither, young lady, for all your mealy-mouthed pumping. Might as well go on back to the other room and talk to Miss Joan."

I was beginning to think so too but I tried once more.

"You promised her mother you'd look out for Miss Joan," I said. "I'd like to take her back to The Camp with me and my father will see that she reaches her father safely. Don't you think that would be best?"

She shut her mouth up just like a steel trap and took hold of my arm and led me to the door. I went in without another word. Agnes certainly wasn't a talkative person.

Joan and I talked in low tones all morning, telling each other whatever we thought would throw any light on the subject of our difficulty. Joan remembered that she had heard her mother say once that Sam had served a light prison sentence and we thought probably the stranger was some pal of his who had joined him for this new enterprise, whatever it was. It wasn't a cheerful thought.

Darkness came and the men hadn't come back yet. Agnes gave us our supper and suggested that we go to bed early as Sam would be better pleased to find us out of the way when he came in. We took this hint and crept away, though not to sleep. The long day in the stuffy hut, the atmosphere of death and depression that hung over us, made us both wakeful and we lay a long time not speaking, but just listening to the sound the wind made outside. We heard Sam and the other man come in after a while and there was a great deal of low-voiced conversation outside of our door. I heard Agnes say once,

"I passed my promise and that's all there is to it. It ain't no use to talk about it."

There was another murmur from one of the men and then she said sharply,

"I ain't agoing to be a party to any such thing. Whyn't you turn 'em both loose and make your getaway while the going is still good?"

"I ain't so sure it is good," Sam answered, this time loud enough to be heard. "That guy at The Camp—"

"Shut up, can't you?" Agnes interrupted. "Do you want them girls to hear?"

They moved away out of earshot and I could have cried with disappointment. What "guy" at The Camp? Billy or Pryor or Burr? And what about him? Did it mean that one of The Camp men was on the trail of our hiding place, or was there some connection between the "job" Sam and his friend had on hand and The Camp? I'd have given my prettiest evening gown to know.

Along toward midnight there was a sudden shuf-

fling of footsteps and the sound of Agnes' crying. I sat up straight and listened. Something mighty strange and weird was taking place out in that room and after a while I crept quietly to the door and opened it a crack. It was dark and the night wind was blowing through the open door. I went cautiously forward. Nobody in the two little rooms, nobody in the whole hut apparently but Joan and me. I crept fearfully to the bed where the body of Mrs. Marchant had been placed and put out my hand, trembling all over as I did so. It was as I dimly suspected—the body was gone.

I went back and bent over Joan.

"Wake up, dear, wake up!" I called.

She stirred and murmured something in her sleep. I got her awake at last and made her understand

what had happened. She was wild with rage and fear.

"How did they dare—my mother!" she said. "Oh, Pat, do you suppose they—they—"

I knew what she meant but I wouldn't talk about it.

"Let's hurry after them and see if we can find out what they are doing," I suggested. "It's barely possible that they have an—an undertaker across The Bridge and are taking her over."

"They couldn't—you know they never could get her across that narrow place," Joan protested, and I didn't think they could either, but there wasn't anything else to say. We hurried on our clothes and left the hut, the cold night air making us shiver. There was no one in sight and no sound of voices

to guide us. We hurried down to The Bridge but it was deserted.

"W-where shall we go now?" Joan asked, her teeth chattering with mingled chill and fear.

"Let's walk around. We may run into them."

We walked for perhaps half an hour but didn't see any one and when we came in sight of the hut once more a light was burning. We hurried in and confronted Agnes and the two men.

"Where have you put her?" Joan raved. "Sam, Agnes, where is my mother?"

Agnes went up and put her arm around the girl, the first and only caress I ever saw her offer.

"She's all right, Miss Joan. She's in a safe place. Don't you worry."

"Yes, but where—where?"

"Quit talking, Agnes," Sam said. "We're looking after your mother all right," he told Joan.

And that's all we could get out of any of them, though Joan pleaded and raged alternately. We went back to bed at last and fell asleep, not to wake this time till broad daylight.

We knew the first thing in the morning that some kind of plan was on foot. Agnes was packing bedding and dishes into boxes and Sam and the other man, who, we learned, was "Spud" Newton, spent the day in knocking the rude furniture to pieces and tearing down the walls of the hut. By night there was only a rough shelter under the walls of the mountain against which the hut had been built. I noticed that Agnes had saved enough of the pine boughs to make *one* bed and Joan and I would have

liked very much to know who was expected to occupy it.

Joan thought the men were going to take us over to The Bridge and let us find our way to The Camp, after which they would go on down to Terminus, leaving Agnes to follow later. I had my own ideas about who would be left, and the party didn't include Agnes nor Sam and Spud. I only hoped that was their plan. If the place was once free of them I was sure we could hold out until Billy or Burr would happen close enough to The Bridge to see the signal I would erect. I'd already decided on the time-honored petticoat and asked Joan if she had one, as I wear bloomers with my climbing skirt. That made her think of her clothes and she went to look for them in the boxes Agnes was filling. Nothing of hers was included.

"Your things have already been sent," Agnes said, with tight lips. It seemed a physical pain to her when she had to give out any information.

"Where?"

"You'll find that out later," was all the satisfaction we got.

One thing that happened that day gave me something to think of—not that I didn't have enough already. I came around a twist in the path and there were Sam and Spud conferring over a piece of paper Spud held. I know a blue print when I see it and I recognized this wide-spread sheet at once though Sam swept it out of sight as soon as he saw me. But as I walked away as though I hadn't seen the men I was remembering a sheet that looked exactly like that. It had lain on Pryor's desk at The Camp and he and Billy had pored over it a

good many hours. It was the plan of the New Western Bank Building of which Pryor Humphry was president and it had been lately completed in Denver. I knew that the day before I had found The Bridge—how many months ago it seemed now!—I'd heard Pryor say he expected the place would be ready for occupancy in a few days.

What were these rough, ignorant men doing with that blue print, I asked myself. Of course it was conceivable that it was the plan of some other building, but still I was sure it was not. There was the funny, humpy place that was the directors' wing Pryor was so keen on. I'd picked out his office on it a dozen times and he'd promised me I should have a special chair of my own there. The thing that made me get cold all over was the thought that perhaps this was the very print that

belonged to Pryor and these men had stolen it from his desk. For the first time I began to connect our imprisonment with The Camp and to know little tremors of terror for my menfolks down there.

Night came and we had supper around a tiny campfire that Sam built. If it hadn't been so dreadful I think I would have enjoyed that primitive meal, cooked on hot stones and eaten in the shadow of the great peaks. The firelight cast queer shadows on the faces of the party and I'm bound to say that Joan's little face looked quite as sinister as that of Agnes, and I don't doubt that mine did too. Sinister! That was the word I'd been trying to find all day. The very air was full of sinister meaning. The hurried preparations for something we knew nothing of, the whispered directions which were only half understood, the breaking up of the

housekeeping arrangements of the hut, all bore something furtive and sinister about them.

After supper Sam beckoned to Spud and they went off hurriedly in the opposite direction to The Bridge. I drew Joan away with me.

"Now, honey, listen," I said when we were out of sight. "I'm going to stay right by the rock as long as we're allowed to. If there's any passing back and forth here tonight I want to see it and there may come a moment when the rock is left out of the chute and we can get across."

We both had our sweaters and heavy shoes on. It got so cold at night that you had to wear almost winter clothes. We found the nook under the ledge and there we crouched, determined not to be dislodged by anything short of physical force.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAVE

The hours dragged by till it seemed to me we'd been all night in our hiding place before I heard Sam's voice. He was coming from the direction of where the hut had stood and Spud was with him. They were hurrying along, not troubling to lower their voices at all. In the starlight I could see that Spud was carrying something carefully under his arm.

"We got to speed up a bit to make connections with Jim," Sam was saying. "Sure he'll have the car above Terminus?"

"Sure. And don't speed too fast along that dog-

goned path of yours unless you're willing to take chances on your baggage."

"My baggage ain't half as important as yours," Sam replied, glancing over his shoulder. "I sure will be glad when we get shet of that stuff. I ain't had no dealings with it before."

"Well, I have," Spud answered grimly. "Plenty dealings and come out at the top of the heap too. This time tomorrow, boy, and we'll be ahikin' it for 'Frisco with our pockets bulgin'—eh?"

"Hope so." Sam's voice was trailing off in the distance and pretty soon we heard him tugging at the rock which closed the chute.

"They're both going to cross," I whispered to Joan. "They can't pull that rock back behind them and then will be our chance."

"You forget Agnes," Joan said and even as she

spoke the woman's spare figure came slowly along the trail. She walked as though she hated what she was about to do. Presently Sam hailed her and she hurried a little.

"You see," Joan said despairingly, "they've got it all thought out. Do you suppose Sam and that man are coming back here at all or will they leave us here with Agnes to starve?"

"No such luck," I said. "I only wish they would. I reckon you and I could handle Agnes, if that was all we had to contend with."

Joan gave me a warning pinch.

"She's coming back."

We heard her sigh as she passed, a long drawn sigh of weariness and pain. It made me feel a little sorry for the woman. I couldn't see what

she would get out of this affair whichever way it turned.

When we thought the men were safely across we went down to the path just to be sure it was closed. It was. Sam and Spud weren't taking any chances even in the darkness. We waited there an hour or so, I don't know what for but I reckon because it was as good a place to stay as any, and we were just thinking about starting back when I caught sight of something that made me sit up and take notice.

"Somebody's crossing from Lunette," I told Joan. "And it's not Sam or Spud, either."

"How do you know?" she asked.

"Don't you see? He's carrying an electric torch-light. Spud and Sam have lanterns. Oh, Joan! What if it should be—Billy!"

"Call to him!" she said frantically.

"Better wait a few minutes. It may be somebody else that Sam is sending."

We shrank back in the shadows again and watched the slow, uneven progress of that tiny light. I could tell by the cautious way it advanced that it was carried by a stranger to that treacherous path.

"What about the rock in the chute?" Joan whispered.

I didn't know any more than she did. We'd just have to wait and find out what happened, I told her. When the light reached the Tumult end of the path it disappeared, the big rock of course hiding it from us. We waited, listening to the occasional noises of falling pebbles and faint sounds of struggling that reached us.

"He's trying to climb over," I said. "If it should be Billy, Joan! And here we stand, not doing a thing to help him!"

"Yes, and if it should be another Spud," she retorted.

I'd been the one to advise caution but someway as I waited, hearing that desperate struggle to gain a footing on Tumult I became perfectly certain that it was Billy. I stood it as long as I could and then I hurried out, meaning to reconnoiter before I offered any help. Before I got to the rock there was a crashing sound, a groan and then silence.

"It is Billy!" I cried. "They'd have left the path open if it was one of their own men."

I rushed to the top of the rock and peered over. Far down below a dark figure was crumpled up on the path.

"Billy! Billy darling!" I called in an agony of terror. "Oh, my Billy, is it you?"

The figure below stirred and after a bit, sat up and groaned again.

"Pat—Pat," he said faintly. "Is it Pat?"

I almost fell backward off the rock. It was Burr. Someway I hadn't once thought of his finding the path. I explained it in two words to Joan and told her to run back to the place where our things were and see if she could find a rope.

"But Agnes is there," she objected.

"*Darn* Agnes," I said and I meant it too. I was so wild with joy that Burr had come and so crazy with fear that he had hurt himself badly I felt equal to dealing with a dozen Agneses. "If you can't find a rope, bring a couple of blankets—and a knife to cut them into strips," I called after her.

"Burr, are you badly hurt?" I asked him, leaning over the rock.

"My leg's—broken, I believe," he said in a sort of investigating tone. "Are you all right, Pat? Not injured in any way?"

"All right," I called back cheerily, wondering how in the world we were ever going to hoist that heavy man to the top of the rock.

In a few minutes Joan came running back and with her—*Agnes!*

"She simply would come, Pat," Joan gasped. "I didn't tell her what I wanted the blankets for."

"Well, I'll tell her," I said sternly. "Agnes, you listen to me. There's a man—a friend of mine—hurt down there and it's all your fault because you put the rock in the chute. His leg's broken and we've got to get him up here somehow. If he

can fasten those blankets around himself, do you think we can pull him up?"

For a minute she looked at me and I looked at her. I was quite capable of dragging her to the precipice and pushing her over if she had bothered us and I reckon she must have felt it for pretty soon she said, exactly as though it cost her a physical effort to speak,

"We can try."

I didn't waste any words planning how the thing was to be done. We both knew the only thing to do was to cut those blankets in strips, tie the strips together and let the rope down over the rock. I was afraid there wouldn't be enough of it to leave a good tie-hold for Burr but there was plenty. He had an awful time getting it knotted about him, for one of his arms was hurt too and there was a

deep cut on his head. But at last he got the rope adjusted and gave the word to, "Let her go."

It was what Tina calls a "right sma't piece of wu'k" getting Burr on Tumult. If it hadn't been for Agnes' good right arm and her left one too we never would have made it. (Pryor Humphry, who is reading this account chapter by chapter as I write it, says I'm treating a dramatic theme with entirely too much levity but I tell him that when a thing is dramatic enough to speak for itself there isn't any need of piling on the fine writing—to keep that for things that need dressing up; and getting Burr over that rock was exciting enough to stand a child's recital of it and still thrill you.)

Where was I? Oh, yes. We were all doing our best and Agnes was pulling like a good one and after a while we really got poor Burr, with some

fresh bruises from the bumps he'd got swinging against the rock while we were pulling, safely on the little plateau at the top. Agnes and Joan stepped back and I bent over him like a Red Cross nurse on the battlefield. Poor Burr! He looked as though he'd come off a battlefield too. The blood was running all over his face from the cut on his head and his leg twisted under him in an unnatural manner that wasn't nice to see. The skin was all off the palms of his hands too, and altogether he was certainly an object to be pitied.

"We must get him where we can dress these hurts," I said straightening up. Burr didn't seem to have anything special to say to me except, "Oh, damn!" every time he tried to move, so I thought we'd better not prolong the scene. "Where can we

take him, Agnes? Back to the hut—or where the hut was?"

"I can't haul him that far and he couldn't stand it if we could," Agnes answered. "Lemme think what to do."

We let her think, while I stood smoothing Burr's hair and telling him it would be all right pretty soon, never mind. It was all I could do in the way of comfort. You can't take a man's hands in yours when the skin is all off his palms; nor can you lay your cheek lovingly to his when that part of him is all raw and bruised. I'd have liked to do both of those things for my heart was just aching with pity for him.

Agnes stood there biting her finger nails and glaring at us. After a while she said, shooting out

her words as though they were so many little bullets intended to hurt us,

"I got to take you to the cave, I guess. I don't know what Sam'll say to it but there don't seem to be no place else."

"What cave?" I asked. "How far is it?"

She gave me one of those what-business-is-it-of yours glances and stooped down and took Burr's head and shoulders in her arms.

"Now you girls ketch holt of his middle—never mind about that bad leg—it'll do just as well if you don't tetch it—and follow me."

I was glad we didn't have to go very far. I could hear poor Burr saying things under his breath that he certainly wouldn't have approved of my hearing. I would have talked to Joan and pretended I didn't know what Burr was saying, but I needed all my

breath for the task we had on hand. It wasn't far —only about sixty feet—before we turned off sharply and stopped before what looked just like a big heap of boulders. Agnes put Burr down and began to pull those rocks about and pretty soon there was a small opening like a door and when we went through it, I declare if we weren't in a nice, cosy cave in the rock wall. It was warm in there and the bottom was smooth rock. It was pitch dark, but pretty soon Agnes felt around and got a candle and lighted it and then we could make out a little of what was in that cave.

It was the most surprising place I ever saw, but first I'll tell about Burr and Agnes. The sour-faced woman began to bustle around that cave as though it were a kitchen she'd been doing the work in for the last ten years. She got some more blankets

from a sort of shelf in the rock and she got one under Burr and the other over, quick as a wink. Then she brought some water in a dish, and a cloth and she bathed the blood from the cut on his head and the bits of gravel out of his face and hands. Joan and I just sat and watched her in a sort of stupified silence. There was a pretty deep gash in the poor boy's forehead and Agnes whipped out some adhesive tape from her pocket and strapped it up. The leg she couldn't do anything with except to lay it out as straight as possible.

Burr didn't ask any questions—then. He bit his lips and stood it and I reckon that was all that could be expected of him.

"Now I'm going back to the fire and make you some hot coffee," Agnes said. "You two girls stay

here and give him water if he needs it but *keep your hands off that leg!*"

She spoke as though Joan and I were filled with a wild desire to amputate the broken member or maybe practice putting it in splints. She hurried away and then I crowded as close to Burr as I could without touching some of his suffering places and began to ask him questions.

"Where is my Billy?"

"Scouring the mountains for you with a search party," he answered.

"Then he didn't believe I was drowned in the Black Pool?"

"No—neither did I. We both knew you had too much sense. Besides before morning we'd found—"

"What?" I asked.

"Tell you later—when I get that coffee," he an-

swered. "Suppose you do the talking now. Tell me all about everything."

I saw he was suffering too much to talk so I gave him a rapid sketch of my stay and adventures on Tumult Rock. When I came to Sam and Spud and the package they carried, Burr sat up with a groan.

"It's true then!" he said. "Pat, listen to me. Is there any way—*any* way you could get across to Lunette and warn your father to head those men off?"

"If there were don't you think I'd have taken it before this? There's The Bridge. You know what that is. And there's the path with the rock in the opening. Do you think I could get down that rock?"

"No—no, of course not," he said. "But Pat—

somebody's got to stop those men before they get down to Denver."

"Why?" I asked. "Are they going to rob some one?"

"Rob and murder too, if my guess is right," he said. "It's the new bank building, don't you remember? There's to be a directors' meeting there tomorrow at ten and the vaults have already been filled. The money was transferred last week from the old building. We—Humphry and the directors—have received warnings that an attack would be made on the place before long. Some of that anarchist stuff, I suppose. They placed a guard about it but there's an underground passage leading to the vaults which is supposed to be unknown. I happen to know that two of the workmen who knew of that passage have disappeared

and I'm willing to wager a tidy sum that your Spud is one of them.

"But what will they do? I don't understand," I quavered. I knew something was terribly wrong from the excitement in Burr's voice. He always prides himself on maintaining a "businesslike calm," he calls it.

"Oh, don't you see?" he asked impatiently. "Dynamite! That was the *baggage* the men were joking about. The directors' room is over the vaults and the vaults are over the passage. It'll be a simple little trick for them to plant a time fuse, blow up the whole works and dig out with what they can carry before the fragments have settled down. Pryor's been suspecting something of this kind. In fact he had a hint that the "stuff" was hid up here somewhere. That was what made your

father so wild when you disappeared. If we can get word down to Denver and have police hiding in the passage our birds will walk right into the net. *If* we can get word!"

"We'll have to get word," I said. "There's plenty of time yet—don't worry. I'll think of a way."

He didn't look much consoled by my promise. In fact he lay back and groaned harder than before.

"If it wasn't for this confounded leg—look here, Pat, do you suppose you could get me back onto that path so I could crawl over?"

"I reckon that cut on your head has affected your mind, Burr," I told him. "If I couldn't get over that rock, how do you suppose you could, with your leg and all? Don't be foolish."

Right at this point a scream rang out. It sounded horrible in that little place. I'd forgotten

all about Joan and she was exploring the cave in an effort to be polite and not seem to intrude.

I said before that the cave was the most surprising place and it was. There were all sorts of shelves and ledges and these were stored with bedding, food and odds and ends. It looked as though it had been furnished for a hiding place which it undoubtedly had. The back of it was in darkness and Joan, blundering about on her exploration tour, had touched something icy cold.

"Pat, Pat! It's dead! Oh, Pat, I touched something dead! O—*Oh!*"

I snatched up the candle and ran back there, holding it down to the thing Joan had touched. Poor, poor girl! It was her mother, lying there on the rock of the cave floor, her hands crossed and her hair braided in two long braids, just as we had

seen her last in the room of the hut.

It was a dreadful shock to us both but of course it was simply terrible for Joan. She cried and screamed until I thought they would have heard us on Tumult and I suppose only the almost sound-proof walls of the cave kept Agnes from hearing.

It was just one more of the dreadful pictures I carried away from Tumult,—the flickering light of the little candle, and the still white face of the woman on the rock floor, Joan sobbing beside her and Burr almost in the darkness beyond.

CHAPTER XII

AGNES

It's a funny thing to me how old people—truthful old people too—exaggerate and change things that happened when they were young, when they come to tell about them in after years. There's Kitty Davenport's mother, for instance. She's so fat she waddles when she walks and she has more chins than I have evening gowns. She wears a thing she calls a transformation. I know because once Kitty and I were in the room when her maid was doing her hair. She rouges her cheeks and lip-sticks her mouth and puts black on her eyebrows.

And yet with my own ears I heard her tell that the handsomest man in the township once fought

a duel with another man who said that the girl he was engaged to was prettier than Kitty's mother. Of course there's only one name for a story like that but you sort of hesitate to call your best friend's mother a liar. I reasoned it out something like this:

Her young man—the handsome one—had taken her somewhere and somebody made fun of her looks before him. I realize of course that she couldn't have been quite so fat and that very likely she had more hair of her own then; but still you could hardly blame the second young man for laughing. Her escort though was a very chivalrous person and probably he struck or even knocked down the aspersor of his lady's looks. The incident came to Kitty's mother—of course she wasn't Kitty's or anybody's mother then—and the *duel story* is what

her memory made of it after twenty years.

So to be on the safe side I'm writing all this down just as it happened and then I won't always be asking myself when I tell my grandchildren about it, though of course I have plenty of hair and no possibility of more than one chin, "Now did this really happen or am I imagining it?"

Now I'll go back to the cave and Joan and her mother. It was really Burr who got her quiet at last. He called her over to him and talked to her so kindly and patted her hand, even if his own was smarting like fire, that after while she stopped crying and began to tell Burr all she had told me of her life and her mother's.

I was awfully glad Burr had such a good effect on her and I was just as sorry as I could be for the poor child, but I didn't think then and I never have

thought that it was the best taste possible for her to tell all her private affairs to a perfect stranger.

Agnes came back with the coffee and do you know the dear old thing had brought enough for us too? I was beginning to develop a positive affection for Agnes.

Joan pitched right in on her about her mother and Agnes told her with a good deal of dignity that it was the only safe place she knew to put her after the hut was torn down and that Sam had promised to arrange with an undertaker to be on Lunette the next afternoon. Burr and I looked at each other. We had a pretty good idea of how Sam intended to be anywhere within hailing distance of Lunette by tomorrow.

Agnes had brought along some liniment and she proceeded to doctor up Burr's hurts some more.

He took it like a lamb and kept up a conversation with her all the while. I wondered if he were going to tell her about Sam and Spud's little engagement in Denver but he didn't.

There had been a sheet over Mrs. Marchant's face when Joan found her and we'd left it pulled down. Agnes went back and began to rearrange it and I leaned over Burr and whispered:

"Keep her talking when she comes back. I'm going to slip away."

"Pat, what are you planning?" he said sternly. "Not to attempt that path? You shall not. It's a twelve-foot drop over that rock and you'd surely miss it in the darkness. I forbid you to leave this cave."

I had to smile at that. Burr, helpless, mad with impatience to get the warning to The Camp, for-

bidding me to leave! It had its funny side, though Burr didn't appear to see it.

"I won't try the rock," I promised him. "I—think I know of another way."

Agnes came back just then and we didn't say any more. Burr began to ask her questions about the formation of the cave and pretty soon I strolled out casually as though I wanted to see what kind of a night it was outside.

I had told Burr I knew of another way—and I did but his hair would have risen right up with horror if he'd known what it was. I'd made up my mind I'd try The Bridge itself.

Don't think I didn't realize what I was attempting. I'd studied that threadlike ridge of rock too many times not to know that I was taking my life in my hands—or rather in my feet—when I under-

took to cross The Bridge. And I knew too that it would hurt my Billy more to lose me than to have the bank blown up a dozen times. But—you see—*it was my job!* I was the only one who knew about Sam and Spud. The only one who was in a position to cross, that is. Of course Joan knew, but she didn't have any responsibility in the matter and besides there was her voice. A gift like that ought to be public property and everybody ought to do all they can to develop it. And—this was a better reason than the other—I knew Joan wouldn't dare try it. She'd borne all she could and her nerves were a wreck.

The Bridge looked even narrower from the Tumult side than it had from Lunette. I had to climb up on some big boulders to find the end of it. I'd

just reached the top of the highest boulder when a hand clutched my ankle and jerked me back.

"So this is what you're up to, young lady, is it?" Agnes said. "I thought as much."

"Let me go, Agnes," I said. "I've got—I've got an important engagement on the other side!"

"What?" she asked grimly.

"Well—Burr Thomas needs a doctor. I'm going to telephone to Terminus for one."

"How're you going to get him across when you've found him? The rock is still in the chute and you see what happened to your friend when *he* tried it."

"You're going to take the rock away and let him cross the path," I said confidently. "And it would save a lot of time and perhaps my neck if you'd take it away now and let me go that way."

"A neck that supports a head so full of craziness

ain't worth saving," she told me. "I believe to my soul you're just reckless enough to try that Bridge."

"I surely am, unless you take the rock away."

"What you in such a hurry to get across for?" she asked. "You can wait till daylight for that there doctor. Chances are you'd slip and fall from the path if I did let you across. You ain't got no light."

"Oh, I can feel my way," I said gaily. "Dear Agnes—nice, sweet, accommodating Agnes, you are going to let me cross, aren't you?"

"I ain't then," she said crossly. "I'm letting myself in for a good raking from Sam now—taking that young feller into the cave and doing for him. Like as not Sam'll throw him—" she shut her lips as though she had said more than she meant to.

"Throw him off the precipice, you mean? Nice,

amiable brother you have, Agnes," I said. Going around shooting people at their pianos, shutting up young girls and planning to toss men off the cliffs."

"So you know about Conway, do you? I don't wonder Sam was bent on keeping you where you couldn't talk. That tongue of yours will get you in trouble yet."

"Yet? If you don't call this trouble, what is it like? Take the rock away and let me go, Agnes."

"Not much, I don't," she said, and I knew right away she meant it. "I told you you talked too much. If you hadn't let that out about Sam's shooting Conway I'd mebby let you go, but I daren't now. You know too much for a girl o' your age."

I sat there, my ankle in that strong hand and I thought—hard. I wondered if telling her about

Sam and Spud and the bank would do any good. It couldn't do any harm, I decided, so I told her to wait a minute while I told her what else I knew.

"Oh, pooh, that ain't nothing," she said scornfully. "Them rich men ain't going to miss the few millions they got stored away. I ain't faultin' Sam none for that."

"What about the men who will be killed in that explosion?" I asked. "Do you approve of that too?"

"There won't no men be killed," she said stubbornly. "They're going to time that fuse for seven in the morning when the place'll be empty 'cept for the night watchmen and they'll be in front. Sam promised me," she concluded with that air of dignity she wore occasionally.

"Maybe he did, Agnes, and you believed him, but I tell you he was lying to you—he is going to set it

off at ten o'clock. Won't you believe me and let me warn the bank in time? I'll—I'll ask them to be easy on Sam if you'll help me across."

She laughed harshly.

"Easy? Is the noose easy? Or the electric chair? Sam's got more to answer for than this bank business. Do you think I'm going to let you across so's you can help 'em post the police to catch my brother when he goes into them vaults? My little brother. Sam's ten years younger than me, and I 'most brought him up. Such a pretty little feller he was, with his big eyes that always seemed to be askin' me a question and his yaller curls. It was me that brought him to shame with Conway and me that's responsible for the kind of life he's leading now! Let him get clean of this job and he's promised me to start again. Just him and me in some little out-

of-the-way place where Sam'll have plenty of money and I can take care of him like I used to."

I sat looking down at her in surprise. There was a passion in her voice that told me I didn't know much about the real Agnes. I couldn't think of the ugly, wicked Sam as a little boy, clinging to a big sister and being loved and petted by her. I tried, for usually I can put myself in anybody's place if I want to, but the cruel, twisted mouth of Sam would rise up and blot out the little boy picture every time.

"If you love him so much, Agnes," I began coaxingly, "you'll try to save him from adding this crime to his others. They'll surely get him, whether I'm able to warn them or not. It just means that if they get him *before* the explosion it'll be lots better

for him than if they get him after. He can't get away."

"Oh, can't he, miss? Who told you so? He always has got away and I ain't afraid he won't this time. All I am afraid of is that you'll be up to some of your foolishness and try to cross that Bridge."

"Well—Agnes—" I began slowly, as if I were thinking, "I suppose it is a silly thing to try. It wouldn't help the bank any if I were to fall off and get killed, would it?"

"It sure wouldn't," Agnes said heartily. "Now you're beginning to talk sense. Come down off there and we'll go back to the cave and see how the young feller's making it. He was stewin' considerable about you when I left. Said your life was worth all the bankers put together. I guess he's

some prejudiced in your favor," she added with a sour kind of a smile.

"We—ell—" I gave a sigh as though I hated to give up my plan, but recognized it was best. "Reach me up your hand and help me down, Agnes."

She let go my ankle and held out her hand. The minute my foot was free I sprang out onto The Bridge and balanced on the slender thread of rock.

"Tell Burr I've gone to warn the bank," I called to her. I had one glimpse of her white, terrified face before I turned to face what lay before me.

CHAPTER XIII

ARMSTRONG GRIT

When I was a little bit of a girl I used to love to sit on Billy's lap and hear about the ancestor of ours who fought in the Revolutionary War. He wasn't a general or a captain or even a lieutenant as all the Revolutionary ancestors I ever heard of in other families seem to have been. He was just a private in the ranks. But he did a thing that set him apart from all the other heroes I ever read of, in my mind at least.

He was hurrying into Vermont with orders from his captain when he was taken by the British. They wanted to know what those orders were for it seems they were mighty important just at that time.

They were verbal orders, so this man—Jeremiah Armstrong, his name was—was brought before the British officers and ordered to tell what he knew. He refused. They told him they were intending to shoot him as a spy but if he would tell they'd let him go with a safe conduct pass back to his own lines. Jeremiah said a safe conduct pass wouldn't do him very much good after he reached those lines and told what he'd done. So they offered him free passage to England, but he just shook his head and refused to tell. Then they tried torturing him and they burned the soles of his feet and stuck knives into the calves of his legs but still he wouldn't tell. They hung him up and cut him down before he was dead, and he wouldn't tell. I reckon they tried every kind of torture there was and he just kept his mouth shut and refused to say a word.

Finally they took him into a clear place in a meadow and made a big circle of logs around him. They set fire to that circle of logs and told him it would take about two hours to roast him properly. They had buckets of water ready to put out the fire and they gave him a British flag and told him to raise it high when he'd had enough and they'd put out the fire and rescue him.

Well, the fire burned brighter and clearer and now and then they could see through the smoke young Jeremiah sitting calmly there, the despised British flag at his feet. He never waved the flag and they never got the information they wanted so badly. Jeremiah just sat there and burned to death before he would give it to them.

"Armstrong grit, Pat," Billy would say, his breath always coming fast when he told me this story.

"Be a liar, if you must, be a thief if necessity compels you, but never, *never* be a coward. You've got Armstrong blood in your veins; see that you have Armstrong grit in your heart."

I was thinking of this when I started out on The Bridge. It was just wide enough for me to put one foot in front of the other. I didn't look down but I knew that on either side of me was a chasm of several thousand feet. Just one shaky step—but I knew I musn't think of that.

"The way to do this thing," I told myself, "Is to take it just one step at a time—goodness knows I can't very well do anything else! and keep my mind on something else."

First I tried saying Evangeline.

"*This* is the *for*est primeval, the *mur*muring *pines* and the *hem*locks," but it was too realistic. It was

the forest primeval and its primevalness was what was making me take that journey across The Bridge. So I tried something else, a bit of nonsense verse I'd picked up somewhere:

"Down by the biller,
There grew a green willer,
Weeping all night with the bank for a piller."

This did pretty well. I was about twenty feet across now and the ridge was growing rough. Little pieces of broken rock lay in the path and I had to push them aside with my foot.

"Down by the biller—"

Those rocks on Tumult were almost like ocean billows. And looking down on the peaks of the

Arapahoes was like a great sea. *Looking down!* I mustn't think of that.

"There grew a green willer—"

I wondered if Joan was still sitting by Burr holding his hand and being comforted for her mother's death. Joan was pretty and sweet and her voice was divine. I wondered if Burr would think she had brains. It hadn't turned out very well—my showing Burr what sort of brains I had. Here was he, laid up with a broken leg and a cut head; here was Billy, turning his nice red hair gray because of my absence, and here was I—no, I wasn't! I was home—I was at The Camp—I was anywhere except on this dreadful thread of rock perched up thousands of feet in the air.

"Weeping all night with the bank for a piller."

I hadn't cried once since I'd landed on Tumult. Joan had shed quarts of tears and of course she'd a right to, poor girl. But still I'd had something to bear, too, with the thought of Billy and being shut up in the dreadful place and all—and I hadn't cried.

"The Armstrong grit, Pat, the Armstrong grit!"

I needed it tonight if I ever did. I wondered if Jeremiah Armstrong could see what I was doing and if he would think I was worthy of the name.

Half way across. The shadow of Lunette lay across The Bridge now and I was depending on my feet to do it all. Faithful feet! I thought of Alice's presents to her feet and I decided I'd get mine the prettiest pair of satin slippers I could buy anywhere. Blessed things! I believe they'd go right

on, feeling, testing, but always moving, if my mind went to sleep and paid no attention to them.

I mustn't let that happen though. I needed that mind right on the job. What was this in the way? I couldn't see without bending over, and I dared not bend. I sent my right foot touching it, patting it gently to investigate. A stone—a big stone this time. Could I step over it and land—on The Bridge?

"Down by the biller—"

Got to try it anyway. The Armstrong grit—I raised my right foot high, made a sort of Isadora Duncan swoop—and thank Heaven! my foot came down on the thread of rock on the other side, instead of straying into nothingness.

"There grew a green willer—"

Was Billy at The Camp or was he still out on the mountain? What if he should happen near The Bridge and see his Pat doing a tightrope stunt? I reckon he'd need a little of that Armstrong grit himself if he did.

"Weeping all night with the bank for a piller."

Bank! Did I really care for that bank—for a lot of directors I'd never seen or expected to see? Was it worth my life—for it might cost me that before I made the other side—was it worth it for them? I knew it wasn't because of the money in the vaults; it wasn't to keep Sam and Spud from being wholesale murderers; it wasn't even that those prosperous bank directors might go home safely tomorrow to eat lunch with their families that I was crossing The Bridge. It *was because it was my job!*

Oh, my Billy, your training hadn't been for nothing! Maybe you hadn't taught your Pat the things that eastern girls learn in their cradles. Maybe I was only a wild and woolly little Missourian, but at least I'd learned from Billy to *attend to my job!*

Almost over, and the path growing steadily rougher. I remembered the last stretch which could be seen from Lunette and suddenly a picture which had etched itself on my brain stood out blackly now. *There was a rift in The Bridge!* Within ten feet of the solid earth a fissure had parted the thread of rock. How wide was it? Could I cross it? And if I couldn't, could I ever turn to go back?

My left foot, moving cautiously forward, touched only air. I'd come to the fissure. How to estimate its width? I dared not extend my foot to any distance for fear of losing my balance. As closely as

I could reconstruct the rift from memory and from the disadvantage of the faraway glimpse I'd had, it was about a foot and a half. I must make my leap cover it—two feet should do it. If I fell short by one little inch—!

I stood there at the edge, my heart sick within me. The Armstrong grit seemed to be running out at my toes. It is one thing to proceed along even a dangerous path, knowing that at least there is something under your feet; it is another thing to leap blindly out into the dark, not knowing whether your foot will touch the slender thread of path you've been following, or whether you will go down —down—

The starlit sky receded. I listened curiously to see if I could hear the sound of my own breathing; it seemed to have stopped. I couldn't go on! I—was

afraid! I muttered something about the Armstrong grit—it didn't help. I spoke fiercely of green willers and billers and pillers—it did no good. I bit my lip till I could feel the salt taste of blood on my tongue. And still I stood there, waiting—waiting—to make the leap.

All at once through the quiet night, a voice rang out. Not suddenly, nor startlingly, but smoothly, clearly, encouragingly.

"When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And a man is uncertain of his own name—
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame."

Joan! Dear Joan! She was sending out this message of hope and cheer from her place on Tumult Rock. She was on her job too. "Uncertain

of his own name." She was wrong there. I was Pat—just Pat!

I jumped.

Of course you know I came down safely on the other side else I wouldn't be writing this now. But you don't know the way I stumbled across those last ten feet and threw myself, panting, gasping, laughing—on Lunette. The power of the Lord *had* filled that frame and I was safely across The Bridge.

CHAPTER XIV

BILLY

I don't remember how long I lay there resting. I know that at last I got up and called to Joan to let her know I was across. I heard her glad shout in return, then I set out for The Camp. Those were long miles through the darkness. I was tireder than I believed I ever could be. Every muscle protested at the strain I'd put on it and I had to stop and cry with sheer nervousness now and then.

There was a light in The Camp when I came in sight of it. I thought probably Billy would be there or anyway Pryor and I crept up softly to surprise them. Only Tina was asleep by the fire and, just as I thought, she was wearing my red kimono.

"Tina!" I said, shaking her by the shoulder. It always takes at least five minutes to get her awake and this time I thought I'd have to give it up entirely and let her slumber on till morning. Then I remembered how Martha wakes her and I tried it:

"Git out ob dat, you onry, lazy, no-count limb of Satan, you," I said, way down in my throat.

Tina leaped up in the air as though she'd been shot and when she came down she began rubbing her eyes and looking at me.

"What are you doing with that red silk kimono on?" I asked sternly. I knew that would get her thoroughly awake quicker than anything I could say to her.

"I—I'm jes' awearin' hit, Miss Pat—'caze—'caze —'caze I'd feared de moths git in hit!"

Wasn't that a beauty—that excuse? I gave her

the kimona on the spot and when she'd stopped sputtering her thanks I asked for Billy.

"Mist' A'mstrong out projectin' 'round foh you," she said. "Huccome you git outen that Black Pool 'thout gittin' drownded?"

"I never was in the Black Pool. Where is Mr. Humphry?"

"He out too. You suttingly did sta't some excitementation 'round heah, Miss Pat." She looked at me admiringly as though I had exhibited hitherto unknown charming qualities. She hasn't much sense—Tina.

"Did they tell you what to do in case I came back?" I asked.

"Yas'm, Miss Pat. We wuz to ring de dinnah bell."

"Go ring it then,' I said but before she could obey

I heard Pryor's voice outside. I put my finger to my lips and slipped behind the big winged chair which stood in the chimney corner.

Pryor and Billy came in wearily and it cut my heart to see the tired lines in my father's face. He sank into a chair and dropped his head in his hands without a word.

"Tina, you might as well go to bed," Pryor told her. "We won't go out again tonight—eh, Bill?"

"I suppose not. We're not making any progress as it is. Every hour makes it more certain that those villains—Oh, Humphry, man, my little girl! My Pat!"

Well, of course I couldn't stand that. I stole out from behind the chair and had my arms around his neck, laughing and crying all over his coat sleeve.

"Here I am, Billy. Here's Pat," I had to say over and over before he would believe I was real. He hugged me then till I really thought my ribs would crack and by and by Pryor had a turn too. I was sore all over before I got to bed that night—or the next day rather.

We quieted down after a while and then I told Pryor and Billy about the bank. Pryor had had a telephone put in, fortunately, but it takes forever to get Denver, and daylight was breaking before he got the chief of police and explained the matter to him. The chief promised to call the bank officials and congratulated Pryor warmly on the tip he had given him. *He* had given him indeed!

Then Pryor called Terminus and had a doctor sent up to The Camp as soon as he could get here. It was dreadful to think of poor Burr suffering as he

was over in the cave. I asked Billy if he hadn't better send for an undertaker as well but he said that could come later; his chief concern just now was with the living, not with the dead.

He wanted me to go right to bed, but I said I'd better go with the doctor to show him where the cave was in case Joan didn't hear. Away back in my mind was the question of getting over to Tumult again and finally I spoke to Billy about it. He didn't seem terribly concerned.

"I guess if one small girl can cross that Bridge—Oh, Pat, you little heroine, how did you dare?—some of us husky men can make it."

"But that's just the point," I insisted. "It was just because I am small and my feet are narrow that I could. Your number twelves—" I glanced

down at his heavy fishing boots—"couldn't find room for a third of themselves."

They didn't say anything more about it except to tell me not to worry, it would be attended to some way and by and by the doctor drove up the burro path—and a sweet time he had getting up it too—and we all walked over to The Bridge. It was broad daylight then and easy enough to see. I took one look at the thread of rock I'd crossed a few hours before and I leaned against Billy so sick and dizzy I could hardly stand.

"There!" he said, half angrily, half tenderly. "I knew it would be too much for you. I'll take you right back to The Camp and put you to bed."

"No, no," I begged. "I'm all right, truly I am. It was just seeing what it looked like in daylight and remembering— I'm better now."

Pryor and the doctor were looking for the little path below and I had to show it to them at last. It just shows how much of a chance we'd ever have of being found on Tumult Rock if we'd depended on their finding that path.

Pryor crossed over and in a few minutes he was back.

"The rock's there all right, and straight and smooth as the Rock of Gibralter. What in thunder'll we do?"

"Let's call Joan," I said. "Maybe we can make Agnes push it away."

So I called, and the men called. We yelled for Joan and Burr and last I called Agnes. Not a soul answered.

"What does it mean?" Pryor asked, looking anx-

iously from Billy to me and from me to the doctor. "You're sure there is no other way to leave Tumult?"

"Only by airship and I'm afraid there's no suitable landing place there," I told him.

"You don't think they could have crossed as you did, on The Bridge?" the doctor asked.

I shook my head derisively. Joan would never try it, Agnes didn't want to leave, and how far would Burr get with a broken leg?

It was a puzzling situation, yet it had something funny about it too. Those three grown men, two of them distinguished in the business world, the other high in his profession, all standing there gazing helplessly across the chasm. I reckon they'd have been there yet if help had not come from an unexpected source. It was Tina.

I didn't even know she had followed until all of a sudden she bobbed up in front, a green sweater of Billy's over the trailing red silk kimono, her wool "wropped" for the night.

"Mist' A'mstrong, you-all go ovah fust, then Mist' Humphry behime him. Mist' Humphry climb up on Mist' A'mstrong's shoulder and git up de big rock an' push hit away."

It was just as simple as that. There was hardly time to realize the men had crossed before the big rock swung out of the chute under Pryor's strong hands. It seems there was just one way you turned it to make it move from the groove in which it fitted so smoothly. Pryor found that way.

I led the procession to the cave. There was an ominous silence on Tumult that made us all rather quiet as we went. I don't know what we expected

to see, but it certainly wasn't the sight that met our eyes. Burr, Joan and Agnes, all wrapped in blankets side by side and all sound asleep. *Did you ever!*

Agnes hadn't a word to say when she found we were there. She came up and felt me all over as if to see if I had broken anything, but she spoke not one word—to me at least. She answered some of the questions Billy put to her and she let the men raise the sheet and see poor Mrs. Marchant.

We had a frightful time getting Burr back to The Camp. The doctor had brought his case and he set the leg before we left the cave as he was afraid to start back with it hanging. He said Agnes had done a good job on the rest of his wounds and Agnes gave him stare for stare when he looked at her.

We brought Joan back with us but Agnes refused to budge. She said she had a right to stay where she was; that she hadn't harmed nobody at no time and she'd like to see the color of anybody's hair that tried to take her off that rock against her will. I reckon the men thought they had enough of a job on hand getting Burr across without tackling her, so they let her stay. Billy warned her however that we would send the coroner up to see about Mrs. Marchant's body and then she would probably be brought down for a witness in case there was an inquest.

"What the good of an inquest?" she asked. "Mrs. Marchant died a natural death due to an incurable disease. What's there to witness about in that?"

Billy said she could tell all that to the coroner, and we left her finally alone in the cave. I told

them there was food enough to take care of her.

Pryor had the presence of mind to roll the gateway rock down into the chasm, leaving the step up the chute open forever. I shivered all over when I heard the faint sound of it away, away down. I thought of something else that might have gone the same way.

Oh, how good The Camp looked to us when we came in sight of it that morning! The sun was shining on its stained green shingles, the birds were chirping and chipmunks were running through the trees as though they were mad with joy. Ah Loo had a wonderful breakfast waiting for us. Waffles, and fried chicken and rainbow trout all crispy, with corn meal and *coffee!* Nothing ever was so good as that coffee. Joan and I ate as though we never expected to see food again in this world and

even Burr, dumped in a heap on the living room couch till they could get him to bed, asked for a second waffle.

We were a pretty quiet crowd though. I was dead for sleep. Joan still grieved for her mother. Pryor had the bank thing on his mind and Billy—well, Billy would get up every now and then and kiss me in a sort of solemn, perhaps-I'll-never-see-you-again sort of manner.

I heard the telephone ringing as I crawled into bed. I'd had a scalding hot bath and a dose of something Billy insisted on my taking, and I was ready for the sleep of my life. Joan said she'd take a nap after while but she didn't feel like it then, so I curled down into the soft nest of clean white sheets and blue blankets, thinking as I did so of

the bough bed in the hut, and in about two minutes I was dead to the world.

CHAPTER XV

GROWING PAINS

I wish I didn't have to write this chapter. I wish I'd never had the material to fill a page of it, but I said I was writing this account so that I could tell accurately what happened. It isn't accurate if you don't tell it all, is it?

It was late in the afternoon when I woke up. I lay for a little while stretching and enjoying the feel of rested limbs and an easy mind, when pretty soon I heard something that made my mind stop being easy right away. It was Joan singing.

Now of course you'll want to know why the sound of Joan singing should upset me. I'll tell you. She was singing to Burr. Don't ask me how

I knew—I just did, that's all. Right there the mean little imp of jealousy which caused me so much trouble in the next few days sat up and made a face at me and said,

"I'm here."

I ought to have sent him about his business in double-quick time. Instead I—well, not exactly welcomed him but at least I let him stay. He made himself mightily at home.

I had a cold bath and dressed and went into the living room. It was just as I thought. Burr was on the couch—they'd *said* he had to stay in bed, but I noticed he wasn't doing it—and Joan was at the piano singing softly.

"Oh, Pat, did we wake you?" she cried. *We* wake you! do you notice?

"Hello, Pat darlint," Burr said.

"Good morning—or perhaps I'd better say good evening," I said, strolling over to the fire. "Is it pretty near supper time? I'm starved."

Joan looked at me sort of queer.

"Aren't you going to ask how Mr.—Mr. Burr is, Pat?"

"He looks very well to me," I answered coolly. "Do you want me to ask how you are,—Mr. Burr?"

"Pat!" Burr said sternly.

"What?" I said.

"Do you think you're behaving well this morn—that is, this afternoon? And after last night too?"

I was a silly goose to let it hurt me. It must have been because I was still upset from the strain of the two days before but to have him able to remember last night—when last night meant walking The Bridge to me and nothing else—well, it was

just a little too much. I burst into tears and ran away, out of the door and down the trail till I came smack up in Billy's arms.

"Pat! My precious one, what is it?"

"N-nothing," I sobbed. "I—just wanted to cry."

"Let her," the doctor laughed, coming up behind us. "Glad to see some sign of feminine weakness in you, Miss Pat. From all I hear you have precious few."

He was coming up to see Burr, and Joan had to come out of the living room while he dressed Burr's head. She hunted me up on the porch outside and by that time I was calm enough to see what an idiot I'd made of myself. It didn't make me feel any kinder to her and Burr though.

There was lots of news at the table that night. The little trap to catch Sam and Spud had worked

perfectly and they had them both locked safely in the Denver jail. I didn't feel sorry for them one bit. Agnes was still on Tumult but there was talk of having her locked up in case they needed her to testify against her brother. I wish anybody luck that tried to make her testify to anything she didn't want to.

Joan's mother (Billy told me this after supper while I was curled up on the arm of his chair and Joan was at the other side of the room) had been removed from the cave and taken down to Terminus to be sent on to her father in Philadelphia. Billy was going to telegraph Mr. Marchant and ask him to let Joan stay with us till we broke camp and then he'd see her safely on the train for home.

"How much longer will we be here?" I asked, surprised. "I thought you said we were leaving at

the end of this week."

"There's Burr, you know," Billy said, nodding at the couch where Burr's brown head was outlined against the green leather cushion. "He can't be moved for a while yet and somebody's got to stay with him. I have a particular reason for staying on here—unless you feel nervous about it?" he added.

I didn't and I said so but I couldn't help wondering how Burr would view the prospect of having Joan sing to him all the time he was getting well. He called me over to him before I went to bed.

"Like me, Pat?" He asked.

"Pretty well. Nothing extra," I said.

His face was pale under the strips of plaster and there were dark circles under his eyes. The twinkle was there just the same though and sudden-

ly when I stood there looking down at the face I loved so *terribly* much, I just went all to pieces again. I ran to Billy and cried on his shoulder, and for the second time that day made a baby of myself.

CHAPTER XVI

SURPRISES

"Pat—you Pat!"

I poked my head out of my bedroom window and laughed down at Pryor Humphry. It was nearly a week after our return from Tumult Rock and Richard was very much herself again. Pryor had been down to Denver and just got back that afternoon. Now he stood outside yelling at me as though I were down to Terminus.

"What is it, Pryor? Anybody killed?"

"Not so you'd notice it." He grinned back. "I've got something—guess what?"

"Chocolates?" I asked, and right away Tina bobbed up behind me. Talk about a sweet tooth!

All her teeth are sweet.

"Well—those. But something else."

"I'm coming out."

He wouldn't let me see though. He said he was going to do the thing up right at dinner and make an occasion of it. He told me to put on my best bib and tucker and prepare for the worst—or the best, whichever way I looked at it.

Tina helped me into my white chiffon dress with the blue ribbon run through my curls. Billy—and Burr too for that matter—likes it the best of any of my clothes and I'm sort of partial to it myself. Joan was in white too, with a black sash and ribbon. Poor Joan! I was trying to be mighty nice to her these days.

He kept me on pins and needles all during dinner, the old tease. But when the coffee came in

and Billy had drawn me to the arm of his chair as usual, Pryor motioned to Soo Let and he came in with a small tray on which reposed in lonely state a white wrapped box.

"Open it," Pryor commanded, smiling and puffing at his cigar.

I untied the white satin ribbon and there was a beautiful white and silver box. A card lay on it.

> "A small token of appreciation from the stockholders and directors of the New Western Bank to Miss Patricia Armstrong, the heroine to whom many of us undoubtedly owe our lives."

That is what it said in plain black and white. I was so bursting with pride I forgot to open the box until Billy reminded me. Then I did and there

lay the loveliest string of pearls you ever saw in your life. The beautiful, creamy dears! I held them against my cheek and kissed them till you'd have thought I was crazy.

"What's all this, Pryor?" Billy asked, a good deal startled. "Those are valuable pearls."

"Darned valuable," Pryor said. "They'd better be. They're little enough considering what Pat did for those men. If I'd had my way she'd have been made a director of the bank herself."

"Pat's already a director and a dictator," Burr said from his couch. "Doesn't she direct the lives of every one here, including yours truly?"

He could say that and it was very pretty of him but the fact remained that Joan had spent every morning singing to him and he gave every symptom of enjoying her voice. Well, I did myself for that

matter. It was wonderful and Pryor said if there was any difficulty about her resuming her lessons (we didn't know what kind of a person her father would turn out to be, you see) he'd finance the thing himself and call it an investment.

But to go back to my pearls. Wasn't it the loveliest thing for those men to do? They'd heard the story of The Bridge from Pryor and that's the way they took to thank me for saving them from being blown up. I'll always, always keep them, and give them to my oldest daughter to give to her oldest daughter, and right on down the line. Though if Joan keeps on singing to Burr it looks as though that first daughter of mine had a mighty poor chance of being born.

That was the first surprise of that week. The next was staged on Tumult and as it's the last time

I ever expect to set foot on that heap of rocks I'll tell you in detail what happened there.

Agnes had stayed right along. Sam and Spud had confessed—I don't see what else they could do with the dynamite right along with them—and were already serving their sentences. We'd just heard it that day and Billy said he was going over to Tumult the next morning and tell Agnes about it and try to get her to come down to Denver and get a job. He said he was willing to help her which I thought was mighty kind of him considering everything.

Joan wouldn't go with us but Pryor, Billy and I went just before noon the next day. It seemed so natural to be crossing the path that I expected every minute to hear Joan's voice singing or see Sam's ugly face peeping over the rock at me.

We found Agnes in the cave. She'd made a regular little house of it, with the things that were left from the hut brought in and all as cosy as you please. She looked dreadful, though. Her eyes had a sort of wild light in them and she was thinner by a good many pounds.

Billy told her the news right off.

"So you see there's no reason for your hiding here any longer, Agnes. Your brother only got what he had earned and he is much safer both as far as society and his own good are concerned where he is than roving about, leading the life he was."

She took it a lot better than I thought she would. She listened very quietly and then she asked how long Spud got.

"Ten years. Sam had Mr. Conway's murder to answer for, you see."

She thought for a minute.

"Nothing that's found out about Sam now can hurt him, can it?"

"No," said Billy. "Nothing."

"Then I wisht you'd come with me."

We followed her around the twists of the path until we came to the place where the hut had stood. You remember I told you it ran into the mountain and there was a sort of hollow space in the rock. Agnes stooped over and ran her hands in and pulled out a battered tin box.

"Look what's in there," she said.

I'd been brought in close enough contact with dynamite to be a little cautious about opening strange boxes and I begged Billy to be careful.

"Needn't worry," she sniffed. "Nothing in that to hurt you."

Billy pulled up the lid, and I had to hide my eyes from the flash of light that the sun struck from it. Diamonds! A double handful of diamonds, a few large, but for the most part small, rattling around loose in that battered old tin box.

"I found these after Sam had went," Agnes told us. "'Low he's been collectin' these for several years."

"H'm, I suppose it isn't hard to guess how," Pryor said. "I'll wager there's many a ring and brooch that shows a yawning gap where one of these stones used to be. What had we better do with them, Bill?"

"I want they should be taken down to the authorities," Agnes said before we could any of us

speak. "Sam's led a law-breaking life and I started him on it. I'm going to clean up everything I can before I go."

"That's right," Pryor said soothingly. "Get straight with the law before you begin a new life. Is there anything else?"

"Yes," she said. "You'll have to come into the cave for that."

I didn't like a bit the way she acted. There was a sort of dull misery about her, a despair in her voice that made me look at her in uneasy speculation as she hurried us into the cave.

"Do you 'low you can stand this?" she asked me. "Your nerves seem stronger than most girls of your age."

Before I could answer or Billy draw me back

as I saw he was intending to, she jerked back a canvas sheet and there lay a human skeleton.

"Birds picked him dry and the sun bleached him," she said tonelessly. "Here's a bullet hole through his head, you see. I found him back behind the di'mond box."

"Sam?" Pryor asked.

"Oh, yes," she said without any particular emotion. "He's been making this place his headquarters for a good many years now. I jest wonder why he didn't shove this here body off into the chasm while he was about it 'stead of leaving him here."

"It was much safer," Pryor said thoughtfully. "People sometimes penetrate the canons from below. Nobody but Sam has ever found the way across to Tumult Rock until this summer. Well, I

suppose we'll have to report this too. Denver police will think business is brisk up here on Tumult."

"They's one thing more you can report, while you are reporting," Agnes said, still in that toneless sort of voice. "Sam's getting all the punishment for what I started. If he hadn't of been ashamed of his sister in the first place he'd never have did what he done. *He's* shet up, 'way from the sunlight and the free air, whilst *I* can roam here and yon as I please. I ain't got no punishment 'cept carrying 'round what I know day and night. 'Tain't enough! The law can't touch me for what I've done but I 'low I can punish myself. While you're reporting these here things on Tumult report that Agnes Simms, only sister of Sam Simms was killed—"

I sprang just as she leaped from the rock. I

knew as well as if she'd told me what she was intending to do. I caught her skirts and held her as she had held my foot the night I crossed The Bridge. She struggled and kicked but the stout canvas of her skirt held and in less than a minute Pryor and Billy had her safely on the rock beside us.

"What'd you do it for—what'd you do it for?" she moaned over and over again. I always did think to try to commit suicide and fail must seem like the awfullest anti-climax in the world.

I was so proud of my Billy then. He put his arm around her shoulders and spoke to her as gently as though she were a little girl.

"Poor soul," he said. "Poor, tortured soul. The world has a debt to pay to you, when its treatment has driven you to this. That's not the way to

peace, poor woman. Come back with us now, and start again."

Pryor was blowing his nose and snorting around like he always does when his feelings get the better of him. I followed Billy's lead as promptly as I could. I slipped my arm around her and drew her head down on my shoulder.

"Agnes, dear, you've borne enough. It wasn't your fault things went wrong with Sam. If he hadn't had a bad streak in him to start with, nothing you could do would have kept him in a life of crime. He's settling his account now—let him do it without the knowledge that the only friend he has on earth has left the earth. You can stay with Miss Joan or you can come and be our housekeeper. Old Martha's getting slacker and more trifling every day and we need somebody to look after things.

Just think, she never mends a single sheet when it is torn," I added artfully. "Just throws it right into the ragbag."

Agnes looked at me kind of dazed.

"My sakes, what shiftlessness," she said. (We found out afterwards that Agnes had belonged to a good old New England family and it was the war between her granite conscience and her love for her good-for-nothing brother that had turned her into the strange creature she was.) "Mr. Armstrong, are you agreeable to your daughter's proposition?" she said very formally.

Billy told her warmly that he was and I might as well say right now that Agnes came back to The Camp with us, nearly drove the China boys crazy investigating the kitchen and pantries and went home when we did as housekeeper. Martha hated

her from the minute she stepped into the house and Agnes cordially returned the compliment. Martha retired to the position of laundress after a while and things went smoother and better at our house than they ever had before. Pryor always made Martha bake biscuits for him, however, when he came to dinner. He said the new cook didn't have the same touch that Martha did.

Agnes has been as near a mother to me as any cross-grained old maid could be. She's watched my diet, and clothes, and parties and acquaintances like the hawkiest hawk that ever was. But she loves me! My goodness, she loves me! I found her one day with a little housedress of mine I'd just taken off and she was brushing it across her cheek as though it was a baby's downy head. She scowled at me though when she caught me watching her

and said if I'd pick up my things when I got out of them it would improve the looks of my room considerable.

I've taken Agnes clear down to the lowlands and put her to work in our house while she's still standing there before the cave on Tumult. There isn't very much more to say about that place though. We cleared out all the things on the rocks and in the cave and the police took charge of the skeleton. He turned out to be a traveling salesman for a jewelry firm and his people thought he'd run away with some of those diamonds. They were so glad to have his memory cleared it was almost a compensation for finding him dead.

There were some things of Joan's and her mother's that Agnes had saved and we took those with us. Joan's father had written that he would be

glad to have her remain with us until we came down from The Camp as he thought the open life and the companionship with a young girl would be better for her just now than either school or his own rather cheerless home.

So now I've got them all down to The Camp again and ready for our last week there.

CHAPTER XVII

MINOR MYSTERIES

This chapter doesn't properly belong to the Tumult Rock case at all and you may skip it if you're not interested in Tina. It's Tina's story—hers and Soo Let's.

Did you ever watch a darky and a China boy getting acquainted for the first time? It's funny. In Missouri we have very few Chinese and it happened that Tina had never seen one till she came to The Camp. She was perfectly fascinated by Soo Let at first. He seemed to her a very superior kind of darky and she set her cap at him openly. I used to hear scraps of conversation that went something like this:

Tina—"Does you-all hab religion dances or sho'-nuff dances whah you lib?"

Soo Let—"No dancee at all."

Tina—"M'mp! Not any dancin'? Hit sho' do beat mah time! What you-all do tuh enj'y yo'se'fs?"

Blank silence on Soo Let's part. Tina takes a new tack.

Tina—"Is yo' got a lady frien', Mist' Let?"

Soo Let—"No flend at all."

Tina—with seeming irrelevance but with a distinct purpose—"I suttinly did tell dat Mose Lewis whah he could git off at, I did dat! I says he got to treat me lak a lady ur he needn't come 'round at all, heah me tell! I sho' doesn't stand fur any familiariousness f'um any but mah steady comp'ny, I

suttinly does not! Is you lak icescream sociables, Mist' Let?"

Soo Let—briefly—"No like him."

This appeared to bring the conversation to a close, but Tina persisted faithfully in her attempts to draw out the China boy. His beady eyes would follow her as she switched her scant skirts in and out of his kitchen and Billy said it would be worth a college professor's while to examine into his mental processes.

It was the powder episode that broke off Tina's efforts to "make a frien'" of Soo Let. I've never been able to decide whether Soo Let was a subtle humorist or the most literal person ever born into the world. He came upon Tina powdering her face one day with a tiny piece of chamois filched from my dressing table. Soo Let's gaze traveled from

the small box of powder, flesh tint, to the glossy dark expanse of Tina's face; then he turned and disappeared in the direction of the kitchen only to reappear with a bucket of whitewash Pryor had ordered for the chicken house. He pressed it firmly upon the bewildered Tina.

"You daubee with this," he commanded, and was safely behind the swinging door when Tina got his meaning and hurled the bucket after him. There was a cold unfriendliness between them after that. It was the affair of the diamonds which broke the shell of her reserve.

Tina had been extremely interested in the finding of the diamonds. She confided to me that she considered our handing them over to the authorities an example of weakmindedness on our part which, if we had consulted her, she would have strongly ad-

vised against.

"I sho' would put it all ober dat yallar Angeline Smiff," she remarked, as she helped me lace my heavy climbing boots. "Dat gal so high steppin' wif huh blue silk sweateh coat and huh white sa*tine* ski't, dar simply ain't no libin' 'round huh, huh mammy say. Effen I had a dishful of dese heah sparkle di'monds I sho' show dat gal who gwine be de belle ob de ball, heah me tell!"

I didn't pay any attention to her of course. Angeline Smith and her wonderful clothes usually figure largely in Tina's conversation when she is working up to the point of asking me for something of mine she's taken a fancy to. I hastily reviewed the special objects of her admiration and before I left the room I gave her a small pin, set with cheap brilliants, that I'd found on the street one day.

Her usual extravagant gratitude was lacking.

"I's talkin 'bout dese real, fo' sho' nuff di-monds," she said discontentedly. "De way dem li'l stones wink an' sparkle at you mek you think ob stars an'—an'—di'monds."

"Well, I certainly haven't any diamonds to give you, Tina," I said. "And I think you'd better be wrenching your thoughts away from jewels and getting them down to my walking skirts. They haven't been brushed for a week."

"Yas'm," said Tina, rolling her eyes as she does when I scold her.

Burr called my attention to the fact that Tina and Soo Let had patched up their differences and were whispering around corners at all hours. I caught Tina sneaking a big basket out of the kitch-en and down the trail and I asked her about it.

She said she was going to fill it with pine cones to take home to her mother. Burr thought that was real touching and daughterly of her and said I was a hard-hearted little wretch to call and ask her why it dragged her arm down so if it was empty. He doesn't know Tina as I do.

Joan and I came home late one afternoon from a tramp on Baldy, with just fifteen minutes to get dressed for supper. I stuck my head in the door and told Ah Loo to send Tina in to me at once. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Tina all gone," he remarked.

"Where has she gone? Tell Soo Let to find her then."

"Soo Let all gone," he said in precisely the same tone.

Agnes came in just then and helped us change

and I forgot all about Tina until we sat down. Then it developed that Soo Let wasn't there to wait table and Ah Loo had to do it in a towering rage and one of the houseboy's white aprons.

"An elopement, do you suppose?" Pryor asked, as pleased with the idea as if it were his own love affair.

"If Tina's run away with Soo Let I'll never let her work for us again," I declared.

"Very likely she won't want to," Billy suggested. "We'll have to hunt them up after supper, Pryor. I'm responsible to the girl's mother and I'm quite sure Martha would forbid the banns."

So after supper they got out the lanterns—Burr said they certainly were working overtime lately—and then I remembered Tina's chatter about the diamonds.

"Do you suppose they could have gone to look for more?" I asked. "Maybe Tina thinks there's a diamond mine on Tumult and she's gone to gather a few to outshine the dressy Angeline."

"Oh, thunder! have we got to hike over to Tumult again tonight?" Pryor groaned.

We called Ah Loo in and questioned him and it appeared that none of the runaways' clothes were missing; only a loaf of bread and half a boiled ham, which appeared to grieve Ah Loo far more than the loss of his assistant, and two jars of wild strawberry jam which Agnes had made that morning. She was furious when she found those were gone.

I didn't ask to go with them to Tumult. I was through with that place once and for all time. I curled up in Pryor's chair and read "Ma Petten-

gill," which in my opinion is the funniest book in the English language. Joan sang to Burr of course. That goes without saying.

In a couple of hours the two men came back, really worried by now. They'd searched all over Tumult and yelled and yelled, but not a soul answered. They'd looked in the cave, and back where the hut had stood, but neither Tina nor Soo Let was there.

"That cowardly China boy wouldn't darst to cross anyway," Agnes said scornfully, appearing in the doorway. "*I* think they've gone to the studio."

"Why, the studio, for the love of Mike?" Burr wanted to know.

"Tina told me there is a gold mine under it—she heard—heard Mr. Conway say so," Agnes answered, hesitating as she always did over that name.

"What's the crazy nigger thinking of?" Billy said, and then all at once I went off in a spasm of laughter. I remembered the night Pryor asked Hobart Conway if he'd found a gold mine up there and he said there was liquid gold flowing in at the doors and windows.

That settled it. We all—except Burr, of course, piled out of the room and up the trail as fast as we could go. Sure enough there was a light in the studio.

"Let's creep up and see what they are up to," Pryor said, as full of mischief as a boy.

The doors and windows were tight shut, for it was as cold as a winter night. We got close enough to a window to look in and there was Tina in the one chair the room afforded beside the piano bench. A funny looking Tina she was. Her hands were

tied behind her with the scarf from her own middy blouse and a handkerchief was stuffed into her mouth. Her eyes were rolling pitifully above the gag.

Soo Let was digging industriously under the flooring. His tool was Ah Loo's best carving knife and I might mention here that later there was a strict accounting for that. On the piano were the remains of the loaf of bread and the ham. The preserve glasses were quite empty.

"I can't make out why he's tied her up like that," Pryor said. "He's always seemed such a gentle soul. Do you think he was afraid she might find the loot first?"

The only way to solve the problem was to go in and we did so without any delay. Tina's eyes rolled worse than ever at the sight of us, and Soo

Let suspended his digging operations and sat back on his heels, watching us out of his little beady eyes. I think a Chinaman has the most inscrutable face in the world. You simply cannot tell what he is thinking.

"What does this mean, Soo Let?" Pryor asked sternly. "Why have you tied this girl in this fashion."

Soo Let answered very simply.

"Too much kissee—too much huggee—no can dig," he said.

Tina burst into a storm of reproach and excuse the minute her mouth was free but under my accusing eye she subsided. She knew that we all knew—and that was all there was to it. She came back to The Camp very meekly. Soo Let didn't

have anything more to say about the affair, either then or at any other time.

It gave me one splendid weapon though. Whenever Tina is impudent or gets her ideas of what belongs to her and what belongs to me rather mixed, all I have to do is to look off into space and say dreamily,

"Too much kissee—too much huggee—no can dig."

It brings the overly demonstrative lady to time right away.

CHAPTER XVIII

JUST PAT

" 'The Love in my heart is as strong as the hills
And as deep as the fathomless seas,
Yet pure as the breath of the rose that thrills
The Soul of Summer with glee—' "

The Golden Voice floated out from the living room at The Camp. I was sitting outside, on a seat beneath a big cedar.

" 'Oh, a batfish met a catfish in the sea—
Said the batfish to the catfish, 'Sir,' said he—
'You are no more like a cat, than I am like a bat,
'Tis a funny world we live in, sir,' said he.' "

"You Pat, what are you muttering to yourself?"

Pryor asked, coming up to take a seat beside me.

"Running in opposition to the living room," I answered him.

" 'Oh, love, love, love, there is nothing so sweet,
Go search all the wide world through.
My heart is so full of it, every beat
Cries out, 'tis all for you.' "

"I sent a message to the fish:
I told them, 'This is what I wish.'
The little fishes of the sea
They sent a message back to me.' "

"Pat, stop it! You're acting like a lunatic." Then he caught sight of my face and said in quite another tone, "You aren't letting it bother you really?"

"Letting what bother me?" I asked.

He jerked his head toward the house.

"That—in there? Joan's singing to Burr all the time?"

"She doesn't sing to him all the time," I said carefully, trying to be fair. "Sometimes she comes for a walk with you and sometimes she spends as much as half an hour at a time with me."

"Are you being sarcastic, Pat?"

"No, why?"

"Then it doesn't bother you—Joan's attentions to Burr?"

"Certainly not," I answered, holding my head high.

"Well, it does me," he said unexpectedly. "Yes, I mean it," he went on answering my accusing glance. "I'm head over heels in love with her, Pat.

Just plain foolish over a chit half my age. What would you advise?"

I looked at him in astonishment. I never once thought of Joan's getting his heart though I remember now that he was always hanging about when she sang and that he hadn't said a word about the important business that was to call him from The Camp. Instead, it was Billy who had gone and I was to stay up with Joan and Agnes and Pryor till Burr was able to travel.

"Pryor, I don't know," I said thoughtfully. "I never once considered you as a—a—"

"As a lover?" he said smiling. "I admit it's a little out of my line. I loved a girl once," he went on meditatively, "I was nineteen then and she was twenty-two. I thought she knew the condition of my heart and I didn't bother to tell her. She

married a man forty years old and never even announced her engagement to me. I told her about it when she had been married twelve years or so and had an assorted family and she said she'd always thought I rather disliked her. I don't want to make any such mistake this time."

"Tell her about it then. You'd better hurry too. Listen to that."

"'When the dawn flames in the sky,
I love you—'"

"I wonder if she does," Pryor thought aloud. "I don't see how she can—the callow young simp."

"Burr isn't a simp and he isn't callow," I said indignantly. "He's the finest, bravest, most wonderful—"

"Look here, Pat, do you love Burr?"

He took my chin in his hand and looked into my eyes. Meeting that kindly, affectionate glance and remembering all he'd been to me I told the truth straight out.

"I do love him," I said honestly.

"With your whole heart?"

"Oh, with all of me, Pryor. With my heart and my mind and the part of me that appreciates beauty and—and—"

"He's a fine fellow," he interrupted, a little inconsistently, it seemed to me. "A fine fellow. I'd like to see him happy."

"Don't be too sure of that," I warned him. "Happiness for him may include unhappiness for yourself."

"You think there's danger then?"

"Well, you've heard for yourself—" I shrugged my shoulders.

"Oh, that singing business doesn't mean anything. She's just trying to give the poor boy some enjoyment now that he's laid up and she naturally selects things she's been trained on."

"They must teach nothing but love songs in the music schools then," I said bitterly. "Listen."

"'A little love, a little kiss,
I would give my life for this,'"

—rang clearly out in liquid tones.

"Come along in with me," said Pryor. "You're sitting out here trying to turn your little self into a cynic; what's the feminine of cynic?"

"There isn't any," I said lightly. "They're all men."

Joan looked up from the piano and Burr from the couch with what I am bound to admit were welcoming glances. Burr was nearly well, except for his leg which was in a plaster cast and his temper which ought to have been.

"Been out for a tramp?" he said longingly. "Jove! to think of being able to get around the mountains again! It's—it's—Hades, being laid up like this."

"It's your own fault," I told him provokingly. "If you hadn't come poking around Tumult Rock you'd be down in New York today in the 'effete' east. I've always wanted to ask you just what 'effete' means," I went on. "I don't think it's at all a pretty word."

He ignored my foolishness.

"I'd like to know how you figure out that I was

to blame for this leg," he said. "Wasn't it broken in your service? What was I looking for on Tumult if it wasn't a certain little curly haired torment that had escaped her natural guardians?"

"Meaning Pryor and Billy, I suppose," I said coolly. "I'll tell you what you were looking for—the Golden Voice of Tumult Rock."

There was a short silence in the living room. Joan had gone outside with Pryor and I could hear her low laugh in reply to some nonsense of his.

"Pat," Burr said, very low and with a note I didn't like in his voice, "Pat, do you really think it was—Joan I was looking for?"

"No, of course I don't," I said abruptly. "Why, you hadn't heard her sing then."

"I'm glad you acquit me of that charge," he said.

"Poor Joan—no wonder she likes to sing love songs to me all day."

"Oh, you admit it, then," I flashed. "She is singing love songs to you?"

Burr laughed.

"When you set out to be jealous, Pat, you do it thoroughly, don't you? Listen now, bad child, and be ashamed. Joan is losing her heart to our host and she has to take it out on somebody, so as I'm the handiest I get the results. Lovely results, too," he added complacently.

There didn't seem to be any answer to this so I didn't make any. Then I remembered what he'd hinted about Pryor.

"Is Joan really in love with Pryor, do you think? How can she? He's so old. But it's all right because he just told me he's in love with her."

"It's a match then," Burr said. "Had we better notify them of their mutual sentiments or do you think they can be trusted to discover them in the course of time?"

"You must never meddle with a love affair," I told him wisely. "It's like pulling open a rose to see why it doesn't bloom."

"Sometimes it's such a long time blooming though," he said. "Sometimes the rose keeps itself curled into a tight bud, with prickly thorns for all newcomers until you begin to despair of its ever opening.—Pat!"

"What?"

"Do you love me?"

I looked at him, and his eyes had their dear twinkle that I loved and yet which angered me at the same time.

"That's not fair, Burr Thomas," I said. "Supposing I say yes, and then you say that you like me too in a brotherly sort of way but as for anything else—"

"Pat—you demon," Burr cried. "Oh—*darn* this leg! Why can't I catch you and punish you as you deserve? Pat—you Pat, come right here this minute or I shall call Agnes!"

"I'll come, Mist' Burr,' said Tina, and there came that wretch out from the bedroom where she'd been listening all the time. "Miss Pat, she do care fo' you something scand'lous, Mist' Burr. She hab you-all's picture on huh dresseh and she kiss hit mos' ebery night."

"Catch," Burr said briefly, and a shining five dollar gold piece went flying across the room. "Now git, Tina; vamose, vanish, disappear!"

I stood on the other side of the room, my head hanging, my cheeks burning.

"Pat," said a voice from the couch, "if you aren't over here in just three seconds by my watch you'll have a lame husband all your life, for I shall get up and go to you. Will you come?"

So I came, and presently I lifted my hot face from his shoulder and said,

"Are you sure, Burr, it's I you want? There are so many girls who would be glad to get you—older girls—prettier girls—"

"A fig for all your aged, good-looking damsels," Burr said, kissing my curls between words. "I've got the girl of girls—the only girl in the world for me—just Pat."

THE END

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